



CINEMA BOOM
100 YEARS ON

BRIDGET JONES'S
CHRISTMAS HELL

THE GREATS WHO PASSED IN '95

IN THE MAGAZINE TOMORROW

Ice rescue turns into tragedy

Three feared dead after attempt to save girl, 11

LOUISE JURY

An off-duty firefighter was last night praised for his bravery after he plunged into an icy lake to try to save a drowning girl and a man who attempted to rescue her.

All three were recovered from a lake at Kinsley, West Yorkshire, by police frogmen but despite intensive treatment in hospital were considered unlikely to regain consciousness.

Medical teams were last night attempting to warm the bodies whose temperatures were so low as to be unrecordable when they arrived at Pontefract General Infirmary after nearly two hours in the freezing water.

Mike Playforth, the accident and emergency consultant, said all initial resuscitation attempts had produced no sign of a heartbeat or pulse. "But in a situation like this, you cannot say that somebody has died until the core body temperature has been restored to normal."

After the accident, Divisional Fire Officer Colin Gavaghan warned people to avoid frozen lakes and rivers and paid tribute to the fireman.

"A fireman has risked his life to try and save two others. It was a tremendous attempt that the officer made. (But) all of this could have been prevented," he said.

The tragedy unfolded at the Hemsworth Water Park, in Kinsley, when the 11-year-old girl chased a dog on to the frozen lake and fell in.

A passer-by, 51, began the rescue attempt after spotting the girl in difficulty but soon became water-logged and sank.

The fireman, 48, from the South Yorkshire Fire Service, tried to rescue him by spreading a tarpaulin across the inch-thick ice to bear his weight. This standard rescue procedure failed and the fireman fell into the water.

Emergency services arrived in minutes but were forced to abandon their efforts in the bitter cold waters. A specialist underwater

search team was called in. Divers found the casualties about two hours after the accident which occurred at 12.15pm. Six fire officers involved in the original search needed hospital treatment for hypothermia.

Chief Inspector Michael Devlin said the girl went to rescue a dog which was later found dead.

At Pontefract General Infirmary, Mr Playforth said some people could survive for long periods in water but after one and three-quarter hours it would be "very unusual".

The casualties had been wrapped in blankets and were being warmed by cardiac massage and warm fluids during ventilation, he said. They would continue the fight until their body temperatures reached at least 32C. Three hours after being taken from the water the girl's temperature was 20C and the temperatures of the men, were about 30C.

When someone plunges into cold water, the body goes into a form of suspended animation. There is a rapid decrease in the core body temperature, cell activity slows and the amount of oxygen the individual requires is correspondingly low.

It is possible to survive on a small amount of oxygen for a long period but a brain deprived of oxygen often suffers permanent damage.

As the cold continued to cause chaos across wide stretches of Scotland and northern England, a homeless man was feared to have also fallen victim to the bitter weather. John Murphy, 54, was found dead in a passage in Bathgate, Lothian, in temperatures which fell as low as -13C. A police spokesman said there were no suspicious circumstances but a post-mortem examination would be carried out.

As the cold swept southwards, the Benefits Agency, responsible for cold weather payments for claimants, announced Leeds, Manchester and Tynesouth were among the



Rescue operations: Frogmen retrieving a body from the lake at Hemsworth Water Park. It was thought unlikely that any of the three who fell through the ice will survive. Photograph: Ross Parry

latest areas where the payouts had been triggered. The £8.50 a week benefit is payable when temperatures fall, or are predicted to fall, to zero or lower for a week.

However not all those to have suffered in the last week will get the help. Claimants in storm-struck Stornoway on Lewis in the Western Isles were among those not getting extra money although most of Scotland had been cold enough to be eligible, a spokesman said. Glasgow airport recorded -18.9C yesterday, beating its previous all-time record low of -18.7C set on Tuesday.

Shetland islanders remained the most badly affected by the storms and further strong winds were expected to hit last night.

Canon Lewis Smith, the convener of the Shetland Islands council, said it was not taking up Government offers of military support yet but might as the situation was reviewed.

About 55 Scottish Hydro Electric engineers were expected to have restored electricity to the final 55 homes in Shetland by late last night. A company spokesman said that would leave only 48 homes in the Hushinish peninsula of the Western Isles without power.

Forecasters say the worst is still to come



Snow to reach parts of central southern England and South Wales by tonight

The coldest night in Britain for a decade was recorded yesterday as forecasters warned that the Arctic weather conditions that have brought chaos to Scotland and northern England were set to spread to the South, writes Louise Jury.

The mercury at an unmanned weather station in the north Highlands hamlet of Altnaharra plummeted early yesterday to minus 23.6C, the London Weather Centre said. It was thought to be the coldest temperature since 1986.

As severe conditions prompted the Government to offer the use of military support to help storm-battered Shetland cope with the worst blizzards in memory, meteorologists predicted no let-up until the new year.

A London Weather Centre spokesman said there was a 30 per cent chance of snow falling in the South in the next few days, rising to 50 per cent in central England. Many parts of England and Wales have been hit already by freezing fog and sub-zero temperatures with

worse to come. "Heavy snow and strong east to south-easterly winds will move through central England and Wales over Friday and Saturday. Temperatures will struggle to get above freezing today and tomorrow, and North Wales, the East Midlands and hilly, open areas may experience heavy snow drifts on Saturday," the spokesman said.

Warmer weather is expected to move in from the South-west, nudging temperatures above freezing by New Year's Day. Forecast, Section 2, page 33

Tory high command puts party on election alert

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Two senior Cabinet ministers yesterday reinforced an instruction to the Tory party to go on "election alert" with an implicit admission that John Major could yet be forced to the polls in 1996 before his government had run its full term.

Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative chairman, bluntly warned the party that there would be "no tolerance for internal argument and selfish grandstanding". His exhortation came in a New Year message to activists to "think votes" and "realise that victory must be our only concern" was echoed in an even more unabashed declaration by Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, that the



Mawhinney: "Think votes"

Tories would "increasingly become a fighting machine as opposed to a government administering the country".

Both ministers made it clear they expected the Government to run its full course, but insisted the party would be ready when-

ever the election was called. Dr Mawhinney brushed aside suggestions of a summer Budget and added: "This Parliament has 16 or 17 months to run, so I work on the basis that we will go through that period of time. But we will be ready to go whenever the Prime Minister calls."

Tory optimism that the Government will be allowed to run its full course was reinforced by indications that the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble - on whose support it could depend if it loses its majority - believes it is capable of surviving until 1997. Although Mr Trimble has made it clear that ministers can no longer rely on his party's support in a confidence motion, he has told colleagues he believes that the Government is unlikely to lose its ma-

jority until late in 1996 and could then probably soldier on for a few months after that.

John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, declared: "The Tories have given up governing the country in the interests of the people. From now on they will throw everything into electioneering in the interests of the Tory party."

But Labour's leadership last night faced an embarrassing broadside yesterday from its own ranks. Austin Mitchell, the fervent Euro-sceptic MP for Grimsby, claimed that Labour risked "disastrous disappointment" by swapping a "Tory Tweedledum" by a Labour Tweedledum in Gordon Brown, and called for devaluation and big increase in public spending. Are the parties ready? page 2

New 'Oklahoma' bombing foiled

Reno (AP) - Two men have been arrested for allegedly planting a huge bomb at the office of the Internal Revenue Service, the United States tax collection agency, federal agents said yesterday.

The incident will revive fears that the US faces a wave of attacks like that carried out by a right-wing extremist which destroyed a federal building in Oklahoma City last April, killing 169 people in the worst act of domestic terrorism in America's history. Ellis Edward Hurd, 52, and Joseph Martin Bailey, 40, were to face initial appearances yesterday before a federal magistrate in Reno, Nevada.

The bomb, a 30-gallon plastic drum, was found on 18 December in a parking lot in Reno by a government employee arriving for work. It was packed

with ammonium nitrate and fuel, the same type of ingredients used in the Oklahoma bombing. The fuse to the bomb had been lit, but it went out and the bomb did not detonate.

If it had gone off, the blast would have caused serious damage to the building and cars in the parking lot and could have killed anyone in the vicinity. Bob Stewart, a federal agent, said. Bomb experts dismantled the device before taking samples of its contents for analysis.

The IRS is a frequent target of rhetorical attacks from America's Christian fundamentalist far-right groups. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who were arrested for the Oklahoma attack, had been linked to such groups in the past, but no firm link with any organisation was proved.

Do you really need 50p more than he does?



50p a day, won't get you very far. But use it to sponsor a child in need and it could go a lot further than you ever thought possible.

Just £16 a month helps us provide clean water, health care, basic education, seeds and tools for growing food - all the things that could make life better not just for one child, but everyone in the community.

In return, we'll send you a photo of the child you sponsor and regular progress reports from our field workers. You will receive messages from the child and can write to him or her. That way, you not only see your money working, you'll feel really involved. Could you honestly spend 50p any better?

Please sponsor a child today.

☐ Yes, I would like to sponsor a child and enclose my first contribution of £16.00.

☐ I can't sponsor a child now, but enclose a gift of £5.00.

☐ Please send me further details about sponsoring a child, or call: 01460 61073.

NEW! Please send me a FREE 1996 calendar of children's photos. (This offer is available while stocks last.)

Name Address

Postcode Tel

Lotteryisms win instant acceptance

DECCA AITKENHEAD

There will be little hope of forgetting it all for an instant when the next English dictionary editions are published. "Lotteryisms" - new words and meanings derived from the National Lottery, - such as "scratch card", "rollover", "Ofot" and "instant", will all appear in the new volumes, ensuring the Lottery's impact on our national consciousness.

A scratch card, as defined by the new Chambers English Dictionary, due out in August, will be: "A form of lottery card with a thin opaque film, which is scratched to reveal the allocated numbers printed beneath." Collins and the Oxford English Dictionary will carry similar additions.

If new dictionary entries are the words which speak for their times, then Lotteryisms suitably communicate the past year in Britain. Explaining the decision to include "scratch card", the Chambers editor Martin Fowler said: "These days dic-

tionaries follow the lead of the general public. This is a word that is in common usage and it seems that it is here to stay. We try to reflect the true nature of language without being too politically correct about it."

As well he might, having added "politically correct" to the official English lexicon in the previous Chambers dictionary update last year. Other entries in 1994 included "date rape", "needle banks", "car jacking" and "ethnic cleansing". "Yuppie" and "bonk" were

quintessential Eighties entries. Now 1995 will be recorded as the year of the rollover.

"It's quite right that formal institutions should recognise something that 30 million people play every week. The Lottery has become even more talked about than the weather - and in this country, that's saying something," said a Camelot spokeswoman. "We've got snow all over Britain - but what people are talking about is next week's rollover."

For such a seemingly frivo-

lous subject, lotteryisms are grimly literal. The Lottery is proving a serious affair - £5bn has been spent on tickets, since its launch in November 1994, and next week's rollover jackpot will be an estimated £21m.



section ONE

BUSINESS 16-20 COMMENT 14,15 CROSSWORD 24 GAZETTE 12
LAW REPORT 12 LEADING ARTICLES 14 LETTERS 14 NEWS 2-11
OBITUARIES 12 SALE GUIDE 7 SHARES 19 SPORT 21-24

section TWO

ARTS 8,9 CHESS 33 CLASSICAL MUSIC 14-16 CROSSWORD 33
LIFE 4,5 LISTINGS 18-25 POP MUSIC 10-13
REVIEWS 9 TELEVISION & RADIO 26-35 WEATHER 33

ACTIONAID

news

Killing raises fears for peace process

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

Concern that the Irish peace process may be in danger of unravelling has been heightened by the fourth violent death in three weeks in Belfast, all of which appear to be the work of the IRA.

The latest victim was Martin McCrory, a 30-year-old west Belfast man, who died after being hit in the chest by a shotgun blast fired through the window of his home in the republican Turf Lodge district on Wednesday night.

His three-year-old son was

slightly hurt in the hand in the attack, though Mr McCrory's partner and another son were uninjured. The killing was the fourth in a series of "punishment" killings which stretch back to last April, but the fact that four have taken place this month represents a significant escalation.

Although the Government does not appear to regard the killings as a breach of the ceasefire called by the IRA, security sources say there is little or no doubt that the attacks have been carried out by the IRA or with its blessing.

Three of the dead are regarded as leading drug-dealers.

Mr McCrory is reported to have been involved only in minor-league criminal activity. He was known locally as a burglar and joyrider, while police sources said that any involvement in drugs was at most dabbling on a small scale.

The first two killings in the sequence came in April and September, involving big drug figures, and the general impression at that point was that such attacks amounted to a lethal form of "community policing", aimed at preventing a flood of drugs coming into Northern Ireland.

But this month's increased

rate of killings suggests that a new phase of IRA activity may have opened.

It is hardly a coincidence that the international body on arms decommissioning, headed by the former US Senator George Mitchell, began work earlier this month and is due to report by the middle of January.

This report will represent a crucial point in the peace process and seen against this background the killings convey the message that the IRA not only intends to keep its weapons but also intends to use them against what it defines as "anti-social elements".

From the IRA's perspective, such killings are useful in showing the organisation's muscle and in demonstrating that in the battle against drugs it can deploy methods that the RUC cannot.

At the same time, however, the escalation in killings would almost certainly not have happened if the British government was closer to meeting the republican demand for calling early all-party talks.

Disillusion with the peace process has grown steadily in recent months in republican circles, where the view is now almost universal that the British

government is not serious about allowing Sinn Féin fully into the political processes and of aiming for an all-inclusive settlement.

The killings appear to be a sign of this republican frustration, but they also strengthen the arguments of those who believe the republicans were themselves never serious about turning away from violence.

Although attacks on soldiers and police have stopped, the six shootings will be taken as evidence that the IRA always intended to use force, or the threat of it, to achieve its ends.

Leading article, page 14



Martin McCrory with his son when he was a baby

IN BRIEF

Rhys has setback on fifth birthday

Rhys Daniels, who suffers from Batten's disease and made medical history 16 months ago when he received a bone-marrow transplant from an unrelated donor, had a setback on his fifth birthday yesterday.

The illness, which causes dementia and blindness, usually proves fatal by the age of seven. Rhys's father, Barry, 37, said his son's condition was deteriorating and he was having trouble walking and talking. Rhys, whose sister Chanté, seven, is suffering the later stages of the illness, celebrated his birthday at his home in Epping, Essex.

'Express' price rise

Further relaxation of the British newspaper price war is expected this weekend, when the Express raises its Saturday price from 35p to 40p and adds 5p to the price of the Sunday Express, taking it to 75p. The move follows a similar hike at the Daily Mail, which pushed up its Saturday price to 40p last weekend. The Guardian last week added 10p to its Saturday edition, raising it to 60p. Publishers say the cost of newsprint is behind the rises, but media analysts add that a decision by Rupert Murdoch, who started the war in 1993, to raise the price of the Times earlier this year was a signal that hostilities were ending.

Cherkassky dies

Ukrainian-born pianist Shura Cherkassky has died in London at 84. Born in Odessa in 1911, Cherkassky, who fled with his family to the United States in 1922 during revolutionary violence, became established as an interpreter of great romantic pieces, such as those by Chopin, Liszt and Schumann.

Birds in oil slick

Dovens of seabirds contaminated with oil have been washed up on the North Humberside coast. The RSPB says about 70 guillemots have been found over 10 miles between Withernsea and Spurn Head. Experts and volunteers were collecting the birds to clean off the oil, which is believed to have been discharged by a ship.

Meningitis kills baby

A baby has become the fifth person to die of meningitis in the north-east this month. The boy, of Anfield Plain, Durham, died on Wednesday. A woman of Crook, Durham, was also in hospital receiving treatment for the illness.

Thieves' remorse

Thieves who stole two rare ukuleles later made sure the owner got them back. David Edelman, a member of the George Formby Society, appealed for help from the public when the ukuleles, worth £1,000 each, were stolen from his home in Farsley, Leeds. Hours later he had an anonymous phone call saying they were in a nearby rubbish skip.

1996 will be late

Scots setting out to "first foot" their neighbours as the bells ring in the New Year will have to pause for exactly a second this year. Because the Earth is spinning more slowly than it should, the year is taking longer to go by and scientists say a "leap second" must be added before 1996. The Greenwich Time Signal at midnight on Sunday will contain six extra short pips before the long pip marking the hour. The leap second will be inserted at the same instant world-wide.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD	
Austria	£4.40
Belgium	£4.40
Canada	£5.50
Denmark	£4.40
France	£4.40
Germany	£4.40
Greece	£4.40
Ireland	£4.40
Italy	£4.40
Japan	£4.40
Netherlands	£4.40
Norway	£4.40
Portugal	£4.40
Spain	£4.40
Sweden	£4.40
Switzerland	£4.40
USA	£4.40
UK	£4.40

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS
For more, 12 months: Europe £110.00, Zone 1, 1996
Zone 2, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 2681, 2682, 2683, 2684, 2685, 2686, 2687, 2688, 2689, 2690, 2691, 2692, 2693, 2694, 2695, 2696, 2697, 2698, 2699, 2700, 2701, 2702, 2703, 2704, 2705, 2706, 2707, 2708, 2709, 2710, 2711, 2712, 2713, 2714, 2715, 2716, 2717, 2718, 2719, 2720, 2721, 2722, 2723, 2724, 2725, 2726, 2727, 2728, 2729, 2730, 2731, 2732, 2733, 2734, 2735, 2736, 2737, 2738, 2739, 2740, 2741, 2742, 2743, 2744, 2745, 2746, 2747, 2748, 2749, 2750, 2751, 2752, 2753, 2754, 2755, 2756, 2757, 2758, 2759, 2760, 2761, 2762, 2763, 2764, 2765, 2766, 2767, 2768, 2769, 2770, 2771, 2772, 2773, 2774, 2775, 2776, 2777, 2778, 2779, 2780, 2781, 2782, 2783, 2784, 2785, 2786, 2787, 2788, 2789, 2790, 2791, 2792, 2793, 2794, 2795, 2796, 2797, 2798, 2799, 2800, 2801, 2802, 2803, 2804, 2805, 2806, 2807, 2808, 2809, 2810, 2811, 2812, 2813, 2814, 2815, 2816, 2817, 2818, 2819, 2820, 2821, 2822, 2823, 2824, 2825, 2826, 2827, 2828, 2829, 2830, 2831, 2832, 2833, 2834, 2835, 2836, 2837, 2838, 2839, 2840, 2841, 2842, 2843, 2844, 2845, 2846, 2847, 2848, 2849, 2850, 2851, 2852, 2853, 2854, 2855, 2856, 2857, 2858, 2859, 2860, 2861, 2862, 2863, 2864, 2865, 2866, 2867, 2868, 2869, 2870, 2871, 2872, 2873, 2874, 2875, 2876, 2877, 2878, 2879, 2880, 2881, 2882, 2883, 2884, 2885, 2886, 2887, 2888, 2889, 2890, 2891, 2892, 2893, 2894, 2895, 2896, 2897, 2898, 2899, 2900, 2901, 2902, 2903, 2904, 2905, 2906, 2907, 2908, 2909, 2910, 2911, 2912, 2913, 2914, 2915, 2916, 2917, 2918, 2919, 2920, 2921, 2922, 2923, 2924, 2925, 2926, 2927, 2928, 2929, 2930, 2931, 2932, 2933, 2934, 2935, 2936, 2937, 2938, 2939, 2940, 2941, 2942, 2943, 2944, 2945, 2946, 2947, 2948, 2949, 2950, 2951, 2952, 2953, 2954, 2955, 2956, 2957, 2958, 2959, 2960, 2961, 2962, 2963, 2964, 2965, 2966, 2967, 2968, 2969, 2970, 2971, 2972, 2973, 2974, 2975, 2976, 2977, 2978, 2979, 2980, 2981, 2982, 2983, 2984, 2985, 2986, 2987, 2988, 2989, 2990, 2991, 2992, 2993, 2994, 2995, 2996, 2997, 2998, 2999, 3000, 3001, 3002, 3003, 3004, 3005, 3006, 3007, 3008, 3009, 3010, 3011, 3012, 3013, 3014, 3015, 3016, 3017, 3018, 3019, 3020, 3021, 3022, 3023, 3024, 3025, 3026, 3027, 3028, 3029, 3030, 3031, 3032, 3033, 3034, 3035, 3036, 3037, 3038, 3039, 3040, 3041, 3042, 3043, 3044, 3045, 3046, 3047, 3048, 3049, 3050, 3051, 3052, 3053, 3054, 3055, 3056, 3057, 3058, 3059, 3060, 3061, 3062, 3063, 3064, 3065, 3066, 3067, 3068, 3069, 3070, 3071, 3072, 3073, 3074, 3075, 3076, 3077, 3078, 3079, 3080, 3081, 3082, 3083, 3084, 3085, 3086, 3087, 3088, 3089, 3090, 3091, 3092, 3093, 3094, 3095, 3096, 3097, 3098, 3099, 3100, 3101, 3102, 3103, 3104, 3105, 3106, 3107, 3108, 3109, 3110, 3111, 3112, 3113, 3114, 3115, 3116, 3117, 3118, 3119, 3120, 3121, 3122, 3123, 3124, 3125, 3126, 3127, 3128, 3129, 3130, 3131, 3132, 3133, 3134, 3135, 3136, 3137, 3138, 3139, 3140, 3141, 3142, 3143, 3144, 3145, 3146, 3147, 3148, 3149, 3150, 3151, 3152, 3153, 3154, 3155, 3156, 3157, 3158, 3159, 3160, 3161, 3162, 3163, 3164, 3165, 3166, 3167, 3168, 3169, 3170, 3171, 3172, 3173, 3174, 3175, 3176, 3177, 3178, 3179, 3180, 3181, 3182, 3183, 3184, 3185, 3186, 3187, 3188, 3189, 3190, 3191, 3192, 3193, 3194, 3195, 3196, 3197, 3198, 3199, 3200, 3201, 3202, 3203, 3204, 3205, 3206, 3207, 3208, 3209, 3210, 3211, 3212, 3213, 3214, 3215, 3216, 3217, 3218, 3219, 3220, 3221, 3222, 3223, 3224, 3225, 3226, 3227, 3228, 3229, 3230, 3231, 3232, 3233, 3234, 3235, 3236, 3237, 3238, 3239, 3240, 3241, 3242, 3243, 3244, 3245, 3246, 3247, 3248, 3249, 3250, 3251, 3252, 3253, 3254, 3255, 3256, 3257, 3258, 3259, 3260, 3261, 3262, 3263, 3264, 3265, 3266, 3267, 3268, 3269, 3270, 3271, 3272, 3273, 3274, 3275, 3276, 3277, 3278, 3279, 3280, 3281, 3282, 3283, 3284, 3285, 3286, 3287, 3288, 3289, 3290, 3291, 3292, 3293, 3294, 3295, 3296, 3297, 3298, 3299, 3300, 3301, 3302, 3303, 3304, 3305, 3306, 3307, 3308, 3309, 3310, 3311, 3312, 3313, 3314, 3315, 3316, 3317, 3318, 3319, 3320, 3321, 3322, 3323, 3324, 3325, 3326, 3327, 3328, 3329, 3330, 3331, 3332, 3333, 3334, 3335, 3336, 3337, 3338, 3339, 3340, 3341, 3342, 3343, 3344, 3345, 3346, 3347, 3348, 3349, 3350, 3351, 3352, 3353, 3354, 3355, 3356, 3357, 3358, 3359, 3360, 3361, 3362, 3363, 3364, 3365, 3366, 3367, 3368, 3369, 3370, 3371, 3372, 3373, 3374, 3375, 3376, 3377, 3378, 3379, 3380, 3381, 3382, 3383, 3384, 3385, 3386, 3387, 3388, 3389, 3390, 3391, 3392, 3393, 3394, 3395, 3396, 3397, 3398, 3399, 3400, 3401, 3402, 3403, 3404, 3405, 3406, 3407, 3408, 3409, 3410, 3411, 3412, 3413, 3414, 3415, 3416, 3417, 3418, 3419, 3420, 3421, 3422, 3423, 3424, 3425, 3426, 3427, 3428, 3429, 3430, 3431, 3432, 3433, 3434, 3435, 3436, 3437, 3438, 3439, 3440, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3445, 3446, 3447, 3448, 3449, 3450, 3451, 3452, 3453, 3454, 3455, 3456, 3457, 3458, 3459, 3460, 3461, 3462, 3463, 3464, 3465, 3466, 3467, 3468, 3469, 3470, 3471, 3472, 3473, 3474, 3475, 3476, 3477, 3478, 3479, 3480, 3481, 3482, 3483, 3484, 3485, 3486, 3487, 3488, 3489, 3490, 3491, 3492, 3493, 3494,

Howard was warned about Holloway chaos

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, was personally warned about the deteriorating conditions in Holloway women's jail last March – nine months before prison inspectors walked out in disgust.

He was sent a letter from the jail's Board of Visitors alerting him to the fact that the system

was breaking down and the jail faced the threat of disturbances. Enclosed were copies of a catalogue of complaints the board had already sent to Derek Lewis, the then director-general of the Prison Service, and Michael Forsyth, the then prisons minister.

But conditions continued to slide into chaos and squalor until earlier this month, when the new Chief Inspector of Prisons,

General Sir David Ramsbotham, walked out of the north London jail demanding emergency action.

Sir David was said to have been shocked by "overzealous security" at the jail which included chaining women in hospital visits, the lack of any visible care for the large numbers of vulnerable women among the 500-plus population and disgusted by the

infestation of rats and cockroaches attracted by parcels of food and food thrown from windows and left to rot.

But many of these issues had been addressed by the board, when they alerted ministers to the jail's problems in March. Their catalogue of concerns included overcrowding, poor management, low staffing levels and a concentration on security issues at a cost of

worsening conditions for the women inmates. It is understood the board highlighted the fact that some remand prisoners had been locked in their cells for all but two out of 48 hours over a weekend. It was concerned that overworked staff had insufficient time to deal with prisoners' problems, with drug abuse or with bullying and that dedicated staff were being struck down by

stress and long hours. In particular it was concerned that the regime did not allow for the special needs of the Holloway's population – offenders as young as 15 and 16, the mentally ill, high numbers of foreign nationals, women with serious health and drug problems, as well as high-risk prisoners.

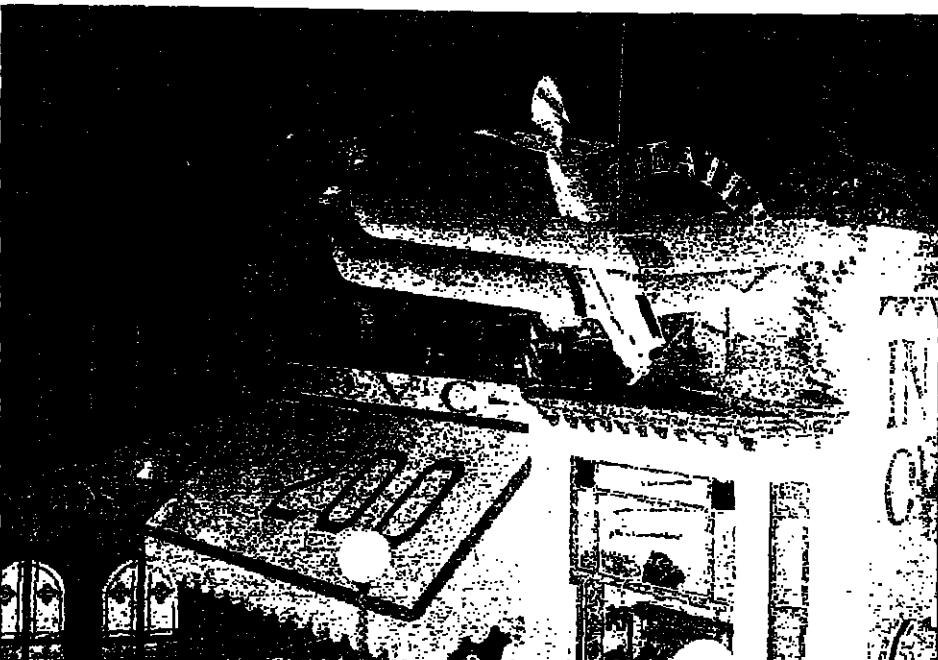
The letters were followed up by a meeting between board members and Mr Lewis the fol-

lowing May. But Rachel Palmer, the retiring chairwoman of the board, said that while assurances were given that there would be a thorough review of the jail and the special needs of women in jail in general, there was no practical improvement at Holloway. It was only after Anne Widcombe, the present prisons minister, visited in July and was said to have been "shocked" by

what she saw, that £300,000 was found to recruit more staff.

However, Mrs Palmer warned that unless there were fundamental changes at the jail, it would be difficult to bring about the much-needed improvements. "The jail needs the resources and flexibility to be able to provide the structured yet caring environment for these women that society demands," she said.

The fight for Forte: How the ambitions of two conflicting personalities have sparked one of the most bitter City battles for years



Billion-pound feud over feeding the nation's millions

MATHEW HORSMAN

There has rarely been a takeover battle so bitter and personal. The implications of the high-stakes bid by Granada for Forte go far beyond the City's Square Mile, potentially affecting the lives of the millions of Britons who pull into motorway services, stay at budget hotels or grab a meal at a "family" restaurant just off the A23.

In one corner lurks mighty Granada, clutching two years' worth of secret research on its prey, convinced that its man-

agement style, innovation and intelligence give it an insuperable edge. Dogged in adversity, Forte is just as resolute. Sir Rocco Forte, the scion of the company's family founders, is so intent on rebuffing the predator that he is prepared to break up the company and sell on some of the pieces.

For a bid that involves two giant, publicly trading companies, it is astonishing how personal the battle has become. Granada's Irish-born chief executive, Gerry Robinson, has "a big mouth" and "knows nothing

about" hotel management, Sir Rocco says.

Mr Robinson ridicules Forte's poor management, and slyly derides Sir Rocco's penchant for shooting, an activity upon which the hapless hotels executive had been embarked just as Granada's £3.2bn bid was being announced last month.

It was easy enough for the media to fuel the personal jibes. The two men seemed so different: Mr Robinson, the self-made man and professional manager, complete with infectious laugh and, paradoxically, a reputation for ruthlessness; and Sir Rocco, heir to a family catering fortune, aloof and diffident. They even have different theories about work: Mr Robinson is a four and a half day-a-week man, dismissive of most over-working executives; Sir Rocco is a self-confessed workaholic.

Following two weeks of trading insults and criticisms, the two sides were finally ready to talk about the fundamentals. Forte said it would "demerge" its restaurants businesses – chiefly comprising its chain of Little Chef and Happy Eater outlets – and prune its hotels operations, which include some of the world's best-known properties such as the George V in



The heat is on: Sir Rocco Forte in the kitchen of the Waldorf Hotel, in London Photograph: Universal Pictorial Press Top left: A typical Beefeater Inn

Paris and the Grosvenor House in London.

The radical response caught Granada off guard, and the predator was reduced to repeating that it could do more with Forte's assets than anybody else. But Forte was holding back its ace – an agreed deal to sell its restaurants business to Whitbread, the brewing and food retailing company, which was unveiled this week.

It was now Sir Rocco's chance to be smug, pointing out that Mr Robinson was holidaying in his country home in Donegal, Ireland, while Forte managers and advisers were working furiously in London.

Suddenly, the situation had become seriously complicated. Granada was offering to buy the whole of Forte, but was particularly attracted by the restaurants. By reaching a deal with Whitbread, which is conditional on the Granada bid lapsing, Forte has thrown down the gauntlet. The outcome of the battle is now so finely balanced that few are willing to predict

which way it will go. In Granada's favour are Mr Robinson's stellar reputation as a cost-cutting, profit-maximising manager, its prowess at running catering and roadside services, and its ability – if pushed – to sweeten the bid.

But Granada also has vulnerable spots. Its bid reminds many of the bad old days of 1980s conglomerates. Why should a company that knows lots about catering and television – Granada TV and LWT are both in its stable – be any good at running hotels? If Granada has to raise its bid to as much as £4bn to win, can it find savings to compensate?

Forte, for its part, can claim that it has answered at least one concern of shareholders: that it had not made the most of the restaurants business. The answer it has come up with may look draconian; but £1bn in cash from Whitbread could go a long way towards convincing shareholders that the present management should be given another chance. This is particu-

larly the case if, as Sir Rocco and many experts argue, the hotels industry is beginning to turn upward once more.

Aside from the controversial "trophy" hotels, some of which may eventually be sold anyway, Forte relies on its chain of Meridien properties and its Posthouse and Crest middle-market hotels. Analysts believe the chains will be hugely profitable given the right management.

The restaurants, of course, will change hands whatever the outcome of the takeover bid. Both Granada and Whitbread have some radical plans.

A look at how Whitbread manages its existing range of eating-out places provides a taste of what is to come. Just along the majestic South Downs Way from Trillick Hill, above Devil's Dyke in East Sussex, sits a squat low-lying building neatly surrounded by a car park. Inside, rows of tables are ranged around a main room, one step down from the long bar and the food service area. On each table, lies a colourful menu

and a plaque with a number. This is a Brewer's Fayre, one of 266 in the country, and it is fast becoming the new face of the mid-market English restaurant. The Whitbread "format" boasts a family atmosphere, standard food, fed by centralised kitchens and ordered, prepared and delivered thanks to state-of-the-art information technology. "Take note of your table number," the sign says, "before you order your food."

Woe betide anyone wanting to mix and match from the menu. Whitbread now wants to bring its well-tried concepts to Forte's restaurant business. Indeed, refurbishing the sites, and bringing in new technology, is arguably Whitbread's chief justification for offering to take the restaurants.

Consider the results: a chain of 430 restaurants where you know exactly what you will get: a kind of McDonald's without the formica.

Whitbread has already proved that the format works.

Its Beefeater and Brewers Fayre chains put sit-down dining within reach of the average family, and its brand names, notably Pizza Hut, attract customers who know in advance what they want.

Under the leadership of Peter Jarvis, chief executive, Whitbread has caught a wave that has come to dominate the food retailing business. Increasingly, branding and predictability are the driving forces. Granada knows it too: it has put Burger Kings into its motorway service outlets, just as Forte has invited in McDonald's to some of its 26 Welcome Break sites.

In the end, it will be up to Forte's shareholders to decide which of the two companies will get a chance to prove the point. For the consumer, however, the future is already sharply focused. More standard fare, at reasonable prices: a hotel room for £35 a night that looks the same in the North as the South; branded fast food every two dozen miles along the M1. Does it really matter who wins?



Rival contenders: Gerry Robinson (left) and Peter Jarvis

Jack and Jessica top name lists

Jack and Jessica were the most popular names for babies born in 1995, according to a report yesterday.

Both names rose from third place in 1994 to claim top spots in the boys' and girls' lists as last year's favourites Thomas and Rebecca slipped back to third.

This year has also been a surge of support for Shannon, rising 22 places to 11th, and three names made the top 50 for

the first time – Ellie, Abbie and Kayleigh.

Daniel was the second most popular boy's name while James slipped from second to fourth.

Among the girls, Lauren remained in second place, with Sophie fourth, followed by Charlotte and Hannah.

At present out of favour are the boys' names Andrew and Jonathan – they both dropped seven places to 27th and 36th

respectively. Meanwhile, Anna, Louise, Richard, Stephen and Mark have all fallen out of the top 50.

Up and coming names in the lists released by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are Cameron, in 46th place, Reece (48) and Charlie (49).

They did not feature in the lists of the top 100 most popular first names 10 years ago. The name game, page 16

Last year's place in brackets					
GIRLS			BOYS		
1. Jessica (3)	15. Katie (14)	33. Nicole (37)	1. Jack (3)	17. Connor (28)	35. Jacob (35)
2. Lauren (2)	16. Lucy (13)	34. Georgina (35)	2. Daniel (4)	18. William (19)	36. Jonathan (29)
3. Rebecca (1)	17. Sarah (12)	35. Chelsea (38)	3. Thomas (1)	19. Jake (20)	37. Mohammed (41)
4. Charlotte (6)	18. Alice (18)	36. Stephanie (25)	4. James (2)	20. Christopher (14)	38. Kyle (43)
5. Hannah (5)	19. Jade (16)	37. Alexandra (40)	5. Joshua (7)	21. George (21)	39. John (39)
6. Emily (8)	20. Danielle (21)	38. Natalie (31)	6. Matthew (5)	22. Harry (30)	40. Sam (38)
7. Amy (7)	21. Abigail (23)	39. Jodie (48)	7. Ryan (6)	23. Callum (31)	41. Ben (40)
8. Emily (8)	22. Olivia (24)	40. Ellie (new entry)	8. Luke (8)	24. Lewis (22)	42. Scott (37)
9. Chloe (11)	23. Rachael (19)	41. Grace (47)	9. Samuel (9)	25. Oliver (23)	43. Charles (44)
10. Emma (10)	24. Eleanor (32)	42. Gemma (48)	10. Jordan (10)	26. Kieran (36)	44. Sean (48)
11. Shannon (33)	25. Samantha (20)	43. Kirsty (39)	11. Joseph (16)	27. Andrew (20)	45. Edward (47)
12. Laura (9)	26. Elizabeth (26)	44. Abbie (new entry)	12. Liam (17)	28. Robert (25)	46. Cameron (new entry)
13. Bethany (15)	27. Georgia (29)	45. Amber (50)	13. Alexander (13)	29. Nathan (27)	47. Nicholas (42)
14. Megan (17)	28. Victoria (27)	46. Katherine (45)	14. Benjamin (15)	30. David (24)	48. Reece (new entry)
	29. Holly (22)	47. Molly (49)	15. Michael (12)	31. Jamie (26)	49. Charlie (new entry)
	30. Zoe (30)	48. Melissa (41)	16. Adam (11)	32. Aaron (32)	50. Dominic (new entry)
	31. Natalie (28)	49. Kayleigh (new entry)		33. Bradley (34)	
	32. Paige (34)	50. Jennifer (42)		34. Ashley (33)	

Cellnet and Vodafone round up to the nearest minute or half minute,

Orange think you should be charged by the **second.**

Another reason why, on average, Orange users save £20 every month.



THE PEUGEOT 106 ESCAPADE.

£199 A MONTH (PLUS FINAL PAYMENT)

All figures are based on a 106 Escapade 1.0 3 door petrol Level 1 with an agreed mileage of 6,000 p.a. *% £35.25 fee is payable on signing a sales agency agreement if you require this option. Further charges may be made subject to mileage, condition and if the vehicle is not returned on time. (Excess mileage charges range between 5p and 5.5p per mile as agreed at the time of purchase.) The sales agency option expires if the vehicle is not returned within 30 days from the end of your finance agreement. *Passport price shown includes delivery, number plates and 12 months road fund licence, extended warranty and full AA cover. Prices correct at the time of going to press.

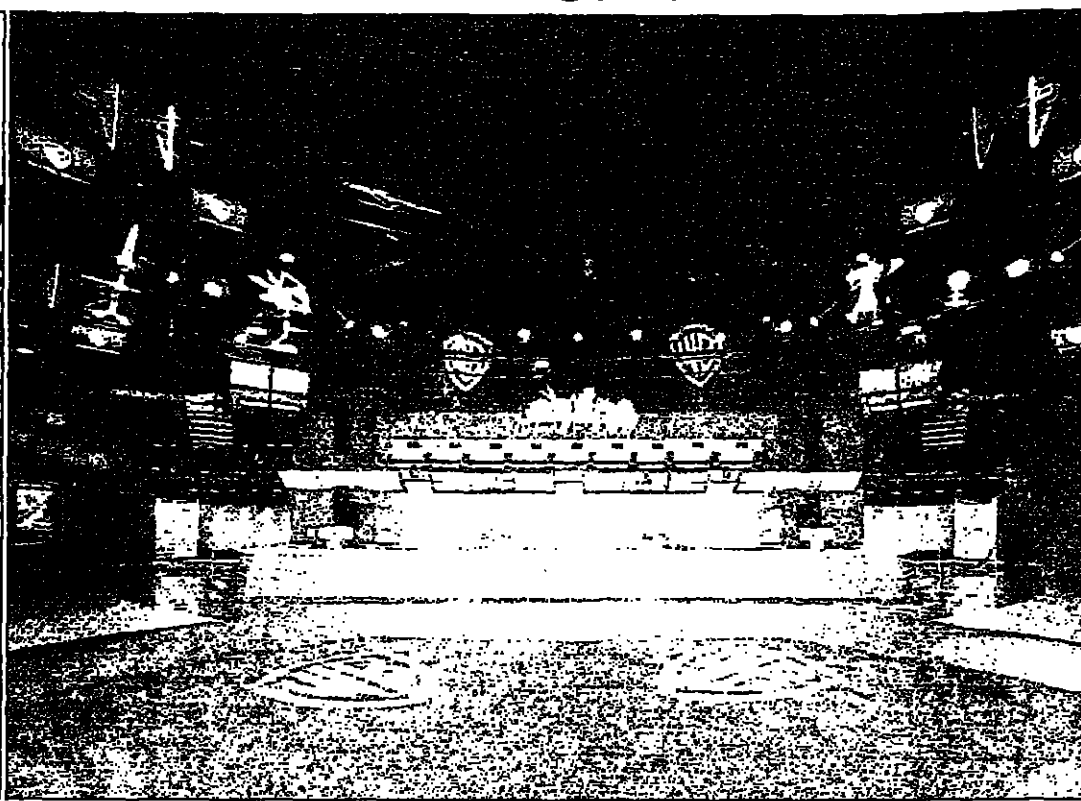
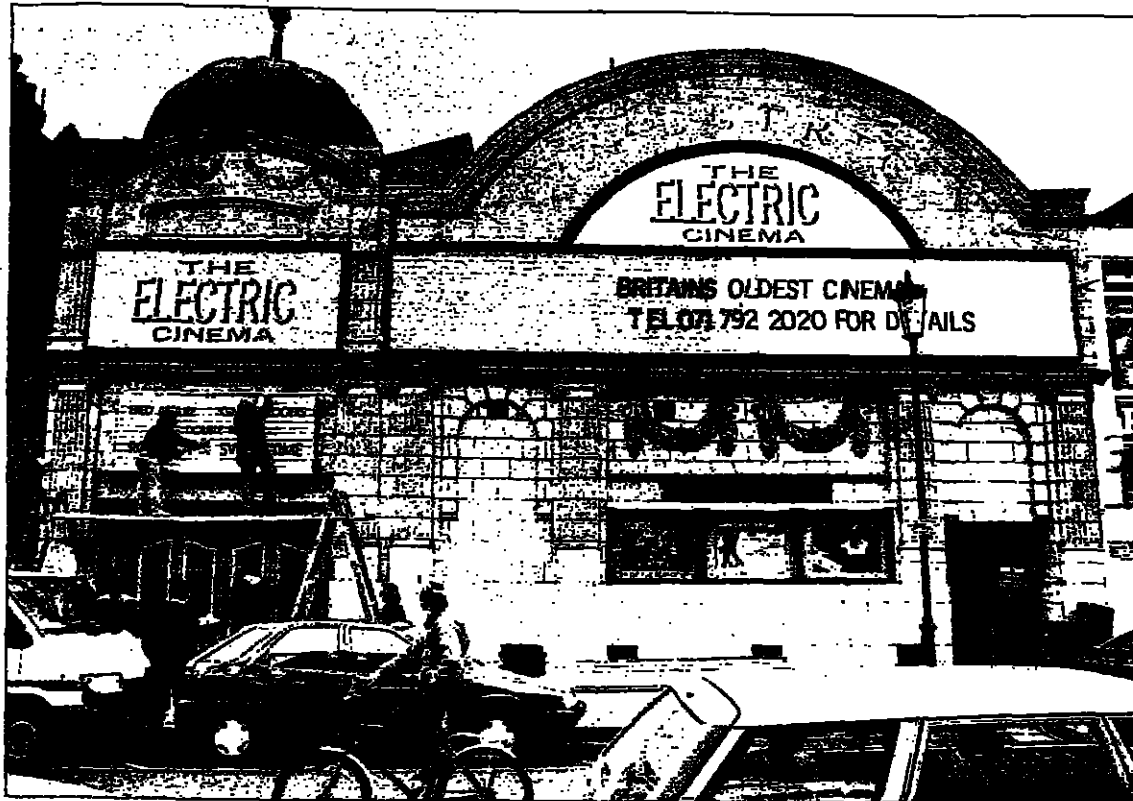
106
PEUGEOT

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 0500 500 106 OR VISIT YOUR LOCAL PEUGEOT DEALER.

THE PEUGEOT 106. LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND.

INSURANCE OFFER APPLIES TO DRIVERS AGED 18-75 YEARS OLD HOLDING A FULL VALID UK DRIVING LICENSE FOR ONE YEAR OR MORE ORDERING A NEW POLICY. 106 PICTURE OR CAMEL BETWEEN 11.25% AND 22.15% (110-CLOSING THE TEN MICRONS) AND IS SUBJECT TO THE TERMS, CONDITIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE INSURER. ORION PERSONAL DISCOUNTS LTD. DRIVERS COMMITTED TO A MAJOR CRIME OFFENSE IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY EXCLUDED. INSURANCE OFFER APPLIES TO PRESENT SALES ONLY INCLUDING INSTANT-AND-ANY CAR ENJOYED BY PRESENT POLICYHOLDERS. FULL DETAILS ON ALL RELEVANT INSURANCE AND POLICYHOLDERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE FOR VEHICLES SOLD BY DEALERS WHOSE NAME, RATING OR OFFER HAS BEEN ON A DISGRACE, HOWEVER, PLEASE CONTACT AT TIME OF GOING TO POLICY. DEFERRER OFFER APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALS BELONGING TO PRESENT COMPANY WHOSE POLICYHOLDERS HAVE BEEN OFFERED. *PERMANENT OFFER SUBJECT TO STATUS. VEHICLE CATEGORIES AVAILABLE FROM FINANCE PLAN: VEHICLE MAKE, VEHICLE MAKE, VEHICLE MAKE, LONDON ROAD 1000, FROM 100% OFF. I WARRANTED THAT THE REQUIRED FINANCE OFFER APPLIES TO ALL TEN VEHICLE LEVEL. 1. CLOSING OFFERS BETWEEN 11.25% AND 22.15% MICRONS ORDERED SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. AMOUNTS SHOWN: **ON THE MAJOR PRICE IS SUBSTANTIALLY EXCLUDED. MAJOR CRIME OFFENSE IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY EXCLUDED.

Centenary of the cinema: Attendances have doubled in the past decade as young people switch on to film



Ancient and modern: Britain's oldest picture house, the Electric Cinema, in Portobello Road, west London (Photograph: David Rose) and the shape of things to come, a Warner Brothers' multiplex

A new golden age revives the silver screen

REBECCA FOWLER

The first audible words uttered in a talkie film were: "Wait a minute, wait a minute. You ain't heard nothing yet." As the industry celebrated its centenary yesterday amid a revival which has seen the public flocking back to cinemas, it was a fitting opening line.

After suffering a perilous first 100 years, since the Lumiere brothers showed the first moving picture in Paris, despite the arrival of television and video which both threatened to kill off the pop-corn crunching audiences, the cinema is flourishing almost as never before.

In the last 10 years audiences have doubled from around 50 million to 120 million, and young people are among the most avid cinema-goers, with 72 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds going at least once every three months, and the number of screens went up from 1,271 in 1984 to 1,971 in 1994.

So what has brought Britain back to the silver screen? In 1985, when cinema had hit the worst doldrums, the first multiplex opened in Britain, offering

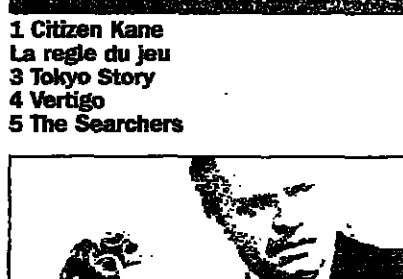
Cinemasgoers' top 10



- 1 Pulp Fiction (1994)
- 2 Star Wars (1977)
- 3 Reservoir Dogs (1992)
- 4 Raging Bull (1980)
- 5 Schindler's List (1993)
- 6 The Godfather (1972)
- 7 Aliens (1986)
- 8 North By Northwest (1959)
- 9 Jaws (1975)
- 10 Casablanca (1942)

Source: Empire magazine

Critics' top 5



- 1 Citizen Kane
- 2 La regie du jeu
- 3 Tokyo Story
- 4 Vertigo
- 5 The Searchers

Directors' top 5

- 1 Citizen Kane
- 2 Raging Bull
- 3 8 1/2
- 4 La Strada
- 5 L'Atalante

Source: Sight and Sound survey

Top 10 grossing films



- 1 Jurassic Park (1993)
- 2 Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994)
- 3 Ghost (1990)
- 4 The Lion King (1994)
- 5 ET (1982)
- 6 Crocodile Dundee (1986)
- 7 Mrs Doubtfire (1994)
- 8 Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (1991)
- 9 The Flintstones (1994)
- 10 Batman Forever (1995)

highest grossing films of the 1980s, saw Glenn Close rising out of the bath from the dead, and more recently the beautiful female lead in the beautiful *Crying Game* left audiences gasping when it emerged she was a he, while the stars of *Shallow Grave* sawed of the limbs of their victim to disturbingly convincing sound effects.

Directors have pushed the boundaries unflinchingly since the first screen kiss in close-up in 1896 - in *The Widow Jones* - was described as "absolutely disgusting" by a film journal. More recently Quentin Tarantino, the darling of the new cinema, has gripped audiences with hypodermic needles and male rape.

But the formula for what makes a blockbusting hit remains as elusive now as it was for the Lumiere brothers, who declared a few years after their opening night that film was an invention "without a commercial future".

The two highest grossing films in Britain are *Jurassic Park*, which used state-of-the-art technology to recreate dinosaurs, and *Four Weddings and A Funeral*, a comic love story

of English manners and eccentricities.

The budgets also continue to burgeon. This year saw the making of the most expensive film, *Waterworld*, which cost almost \$200m (£131m), although *Cleopatra*, starring Elizabeth Taylor, remains the most expensive film of all time, costing the equivalent of \$213m today.

Supporters of the industry are confident it will flourish for another 100 years.

"Cinema is one of the greatest means of communication we have; the moving image transcends language, cultural and national barriers... the modern world would be unimaginable without film."

The film-makers say little has changed for them. Budgets are still always too high, schedules over-run, actors throw tantrums. Cecil B DeMille, the legendary Hollywood figure, said it all in the *Ten Commandments*, when his stuntmen started over the 40ft set for the scene when the earth opens.

"Do you have any direction for us, Mr DeMille?" asked one. "Just save your lives, and make it look good," he replied.

Woman critically ill after attack

IAN MACKINNON

Detectives hunting an attacker who left a woman critically ill yesterday fear that the assailant could strike again.

Ann Fidler, 43, was discovered by her husband, Brett, suffering from a fractured skull and neck lacerations at their Eastleigh home, in Hampshire, on Wednesday evening.

She was taken to Southampton General hospital where she underwent emergency surgery, but yesterday remained critically ill and heavily sedated.

Detective Chief Inspector Paul Stickler, leading the inquiry, said police were treating the attack as attempted murder.

"You have to assume it is quite possible this person could attack again," he said. "At this stage, we do not know the motive."

Mr Fidler, who works at a local gymnasium, found his wife when he returned to the three-bedroomed end-of-terrace house.

There were no signs of a break-in at the house leading police to believe that Mrs Fidler, who also works at the gymnasium but had taken the afternoon off, may have let her attacker in.

Detectives, who interviewed Mr Fidler during the evening and yesterday morning, said he was shocked and was being comforted by relatives.

A police spokesman said yesterday: "We know what weapon was used to cause the injuries but we are not releasing that information."

She added: "All we are saying is that she has severe head injuries, lacerations and fractures."

"The woman is critically ill. We may not be able to unravel the truth or know more details until she is well enough to speak to us."

Detective Chief Inspector Stickler appealed for any information that might lead to the attacker.

He said: "I am very keen to speak to anybody who knows Ann, her background and her habits."

"I am particularly keen to speak to anyone who may have seen her before the attack."

At Homebase prices you can tidy up and put away the difference.

Standard Stakbox • Clear, Blue or Grey **£10.99**

Haropa TV Bracket • Grey or White **£16.99** Save **£6.00**

Muck Bucket 39 litres • Red, Blue or Grey **£9.99**

Rainbow Shelf 76cm height • Adjustable shelves **£3.99**

Zamba 4 • Black or White • Adjustable shelves **£18.49** Save **£6.00**

Pine Shelf Unit 176cm x 84cm **£24.99** Save **£8.00**

Toy Trolley • Multicoloured with pull-along cord • Castors for easy movement **£18.99**

Hanging Toy Box Multicoloured • Suitable for wardrobe hanging **£19.99**

SAINSBURY'S HOMEBASE HOUSE AND GARDEN CENTRES

Good ideas cost less at Homebase.

FREE RANGE

6

Tuesday-Thursday 8am-8pm • Friday 8am-9pm • Saturday 8am-8pm • Sunday 10am-4pm • Monday 1st Jan 9am-6pm
All prices are approximate and not to scale. Merchandise subject to availability. • Bradford, Walsworth and Rensington close 9pm Wednesday and Thursday. • Exempt Watford-Thames which is closed. • Exempt Croydon, Kensington, Camberley, High Wycombe, Northampton, Leeds, Nottingham, Mill Hill and Suburb which open 11am-5pm and Hemmison Car and Park which open 9am-4pm. • Hemmison Car and Park, closed.

Going Places

15% OFF TOP SUMMER DESTINATIONS.

ITALY, SPAIN, FRANCE, MALTA, GREECE, PORTUGAL, FLORIDA, CYPRUS, TUNISIA

DISCOUNTS ON ALL SUMMER HOLIDAYS*

Call into any Going Places shop, over 700 nationwide or call **0541 556666** Lines open 7 days a week

Low deposit only **£5 per person**

With discounts like these shouldn't you be Going Places.

*15% discount applies to selected summer 96 overseas inclusive holidays & charter flights booked at Going Places. *Discounts available on all other summer 96 overseas inclusive holidays & charter flights. *Offer subject to the purchase of Going Places insurance or the use of booking and available for a limited period only. Please refer to full terms. *Balance of low deposit due 30.1.96. ABTA ACC26 1/10/95

news

Parental choice: More families are challenging local education authority decisions after being denied their preferred option

Appeals over school places rise by 120%

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Appeals by parents who fail to get their children into the school of their choice have risen by 120 per cent during the last five years, according to figures released today.

There were nearly 46,000 appeals in 1994 compared with about 21,000 five years earlier. The total number of parents who have appealed against local authorities' allocation of places during that period is 173,000.

The number who decided to persist with their cases as far as a statutory appeals panel has also risen sharply.

Some parents negotiate with their local councils and reach agreement about their child's school without going to a formal appeal hearing. Others

abandon their appeals because they decide not to prolong uncertainty for their children or because vacancies arise in the schools of their choice.

In 1989, 15,171 cases were heard before committees compared with 32,188 in 1994. Of that total 6,534 were successful in 1989 and 13,255 in 1994 – a similar proportion.

All the figures were revealed in parliamentary answers to Stephen Byers, the Labour MP for Wallasey.

Government critics say that there are two main reasons why appeals have gone up. First, ministers' talk of parental choice has encouraged more parents who fail to get the school of their choice to challenge council decisions.

Secondly, the Government's policy of allowing market forces to determine which schools

flourish and which decline has increased the gap between schools.

Mr Byers said: "While the Tories talk of extending parental choice these figures reveal that more and more parents are being denied the school of their choice. There is a growing army of parents who feel angry at being deceived by the Government."

That so many parents have been prepared to go all the way and suffer the trauma and stress of a full hearing before a statutory committee is a clear indication of the strength of feeling amongst parents.

Councils say that every appeal costs them money. David Whitbread, the education under-secretary at the Association of County Councils, said: "Government policies have tended to enhance the appear-

ance of a pecking order across schools, by giving the impression that grant-maintained schools are better than the rest and by publishing league tables."

He added: "You get more overall parental satisfaction if you try and keep a greater equality of esteem among schools."

One of the results of the increase in appeals, he said, was that popular schools were becoming overcrowded. Schools have to be full before they can refuse a pupil a place.

Margaret Tulloch, secretary of the parents' pressure group the Campaign for State Education, said the Government had shifted the blame for school choice on to parents.

She added: "They say they have given parents the information and it is their fault if they make the wrong choice."



Right to choose: Rachel Hart and her parents, who were angry at the lack of local places. Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Parents fight to spare girl 30-mile round trip

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

At the age of 11, Rachel Hart was told she must make a 30-mile round trip to school each day because there were no school places locally.

The two grant-maintained secondary schools near her home in Stoneleigh, Surrey, were full and the only one that could take her was in Dorking.

Faced with the prospect of seeing their daughter off on a lengthy train and bus ride each day, her parents, Paul and Beverly, went to appeal. They argued that Beverly had medical problems and did not drive, and that Rachel had a right to be ed-

CASE STUDY

located in the borough of Epsom and Ewell, where she lived.

The Harts were among almost 300 families in Surrey and in neighbouring Sutton who were told their children could not go to the secondary schools near their homes.

The problem was caused by an increase in the number of 11-year-olds but was aggravated by the fact that many local schools had opted out and introduced separate admissions procedures.

The government has tried to increase parental choice of schools in recent years, but Rachel's father is sceptical. He believes the changes, coupled

with the introduction of exam league tables, has left some families with no choice at all.

"I get the impression that there is choice: the schools choose which children they want. They are running private businesses where profit is measured in exam results," he said.

The Harts lost their appeal, but were told just a few weeks before the autumn term started that Rachel could go to Rosebery Girls' School, a short distance from her home. As a result of parental pressure, the agency which funds opted-out schools had provided extra places and is now planning to build a new local school to take up the shortfall.

Show goes on for Manics

JOHN MCKIE

Manic Street Preachers, the cult rock band, will play in London tonight for the first time since their guitarist mysteriously disappeared nearly a year ago.

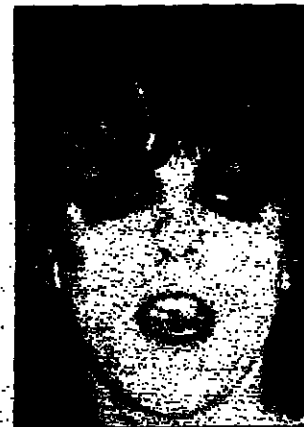
The band had played the Astoria, in London, just before Christmas last year after a successful year during which their album *The Holy Bible* had made the Top 10.

Then in February, their 25-year-old guitarist Richey Edwards left a hotel in west London and has not been seen or heard from since. The next week his abandoned car was

found a few yards from the Severn Bridge. Edwards has been presumed dead for months.

The remaining members – the singer and guitarist James Dean Bradfield, the bass player Nicky Wire and the drummer Sean Moore – are to take the stage again and are playing to 12,000 people at Wembley Arena, as support to The Stone Roses.

The date followed consultation between the band and Edwards' parents. "They couldn't turn it down," said Terri Hall, their publicist. "We are in touch with Richey's family all the time. They've written some new songs and they'll mix that with the old stuff in a 40-minute set."



Richey Edwards: Missing for almost a year

Magnet

HALF PRICE SALE

Right now our beautiful kitchens are deliciously tempting

SHAKER PLAIN & SIMPLE

PLUS
EXTRA 10% OFF

SALE PRICES FOR A LIMITED PERIOD ONLY ON MOST KITCHEN CABINETS
WHEN YOU SPEND £1,000* OR MORE

In the Magnet Half Price Sale you can feast your eyes on some mouth-watering kitchen cabinets, most deliciously reduced in price and available with competitive finance.

Whirlpool

FREE DISHWASHER*

WHEN YOU SPEND £2,000 OR MORE

FREE HOB

SELECTED TO OPEN 1000 DISHWASHERS

UP TO 30% OFF COOLING

WHEN YOU SPEND £2,000 OR MORE

FREE WORKTOPS*

WHEN YOU SPEND £2,000 OR MORE

OTHER EXCLUSIVE WHIRLPOOL OFFERS AVAILABLE. ASK IN STORE FOR DETAILS.

What's more, add to this quality installation and some very tasteful special offers on appliances and you will end up with all the ingredients for your ideal kitchen.

Magnet
Food for thought

For your nearest showroom or a free catalogue – call free on 0800 555 825.

OPENING TIMES: Dec. 27th-30th 10.00-5.00 31st 10.00-4.00 selected branches Jan. 1st 10.00-5.00 Scotland branches closed. 2nd 8.00-5.00 Scotland branches 10.00-5.00. Check each branch for details.

You rest

And the bottom line? You just relax and enjoy it. Whether your idea of relaxing is to wear out your sun lounger or jog 10 laps of the campsite. Whatever your inclinations, a EuroSites holiday gives you the freedom to follow them.

They play

The kids? Relax here, too! We specially select and train all our Children's Reps. And our Euro Fun Clubs offer great fun and games for children of all ages. What's more, you know they're always safe – no matter what mischief they get up to!

We work

At EuroSites, we put more into your holiday – so you get more out. We select only the best sites, so your choice is easier. We train our Reps to give you better service. We use the best equipment, so you have more comfort.

The best self-drive camping and mobile home holidays in Europe.

CALL OUR HOTLINE NOW FOR YOUR FREE SUMMER 1996 BROCHURE

01235 824364

QUOTING REF: 96445 OR FREEPOST THE COUPON

POST TO: EUROsites, FREEPOST B631, ASH GROUND, CROFTON C14 4AT.

WE WORK. YOU REST. THEY PLAY.

COMPLETE AND POST NOW – NO STAMP NEEDED. BLACK CAPITALS PLEASE. I WANT TO SEE HOW EUROsites CAN GIVE ME MORE HOLIDAY FOR LESS MONEY. PLEASE SEND ME YOUR 1996 BROCHURE.

MR/MRS/MS FIRST NAME SURNAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE TEL NO.

EuroSites

Ref. No. 96761. We would like to tell you about new products and offers from Eurosites and other companies. If you don't wish to receive this information, please tick here.

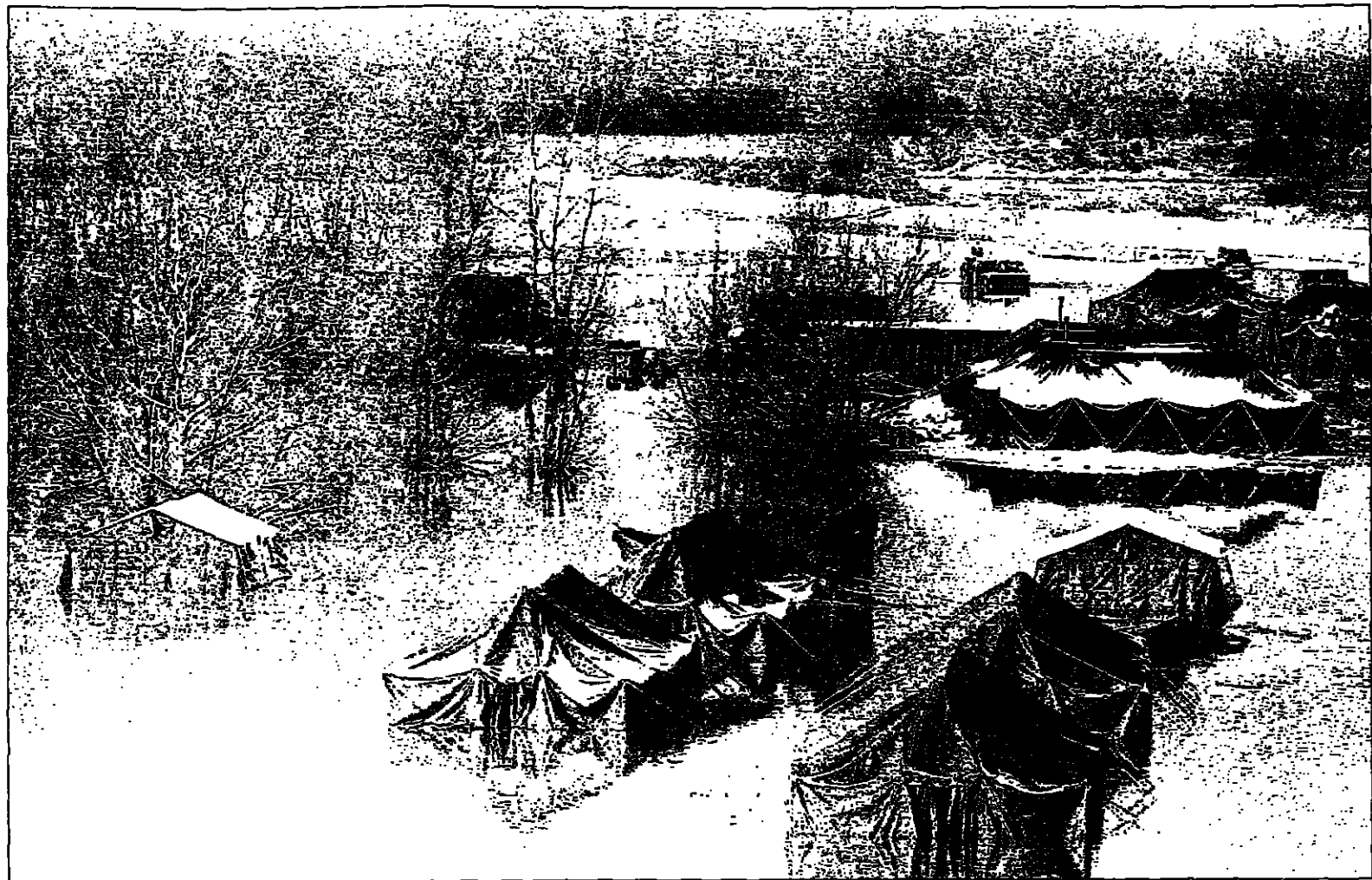
Other companies ☐ Eurosites ☐

Eurosites is a trading name of Airports Holidays Ltd., who may act as agent for Airports H.C. AIRA 168005

*Only one free offer per kitchen order. Worktops are standard postformed only, excluding glass. Cotium and solid wood. Dishwasher model No. ADP 53v. Applies to kitchen spend excluding installation. Finance subject to status. Typical APR 23.8% variable. Full credit details available on request.

international

Enemies meet Sarajevo pull-out deadline



Washed out: US engineers had to evacuate their camp in Zupanja, Croatia, yesterday when flash-floods struck

Photograph: Petr Jozek/Reuters

EMMA DALY
Sarajevo

Torrential rain and relentless snow dampened French and American spirits in Bosnia yesterday, but Nato commanders expressed delight at the success of the first peace deadline at midnight on Wednesday: the withdrawal of enemy troops from front-line positions around Sarajevo.

"Today in Sarajevo the first phase of the peace agreement... was respected," Brigadier-General Louis Zeller, commander of Nato's I-For (Implementation Force) troops in Sarajevo, told reporters at a press conference in the snow on the notorious Vrbanja bridge. The operation "was conducted with concern for even-handedness and strict impartiality and, one must emphasise, the collaboration of the parties".

There was little to celebrate along other Bosnian riverbanks. In Mostar and Zupanja, where French and US troops are based, flash-floods tore through I-For camps, damaging vehicles and other equipment but causing no casualties. Helicopters lifted 62 Foreign Legionnaires to safety from a riverside camp north of Mostar, where a dam burst and floods closed the main road to Sarajevo for 24 hours.

In Zupanja, on the Sava River border with Croatia, US engineers trying to install pontoon bridges to bring across American tanks and troops

were evacuated overnight when their camp was flooded. "The water broke through the levee and flooded the camp... Everybody got out safely," said Colonel Timothy Lamb.

On Wednesday night a Croatian soldier looted off 30 rounds of gunfire close to the US camp, but the incident was played down as a burst of celebratory Christmas fire. Most shooting in Bosnia since Nato's arrival has come under the heading of "happy fire", but commanders have warned the parties to stop such ill-discipline. US officers insisted the floods would not defeat them, but the weather is almost certain to delay further the US deployment to the northern city of Tuzla, which got off to a bad start when flights were delayed for five days by fog. But 26,000 of the expected 60,000 Nato troops are now in Bosnia.

Admiral Leighton Smith, the US commander of I-For, was in ebullient mood at a breakfast with journalists yesterday, citing excellent progress to date. "I want to capitalise on that, I want to build on the momentum," he said - though he acknowledged that the first peace deadline, requiring both sides to pull back from 40 positions around Sarajevo within seven days of Nato's arrival, came during a honeymoon period.

"It's real easy - it's easy to verify, it's close to home and it's early in the game," he said. "We're going to know in the next three months if we've got an agreement." None the less, he was astonished by accomplishments to date - particularly the immediate deployment of British I-For troops in Serb-held territory. "That's amazing," he said. "I thought it would be

months before anyone would start talking about putting headquarters anywhere in Bosnian Serb territory."

Nato plans to move one of its army headquarters from central Sarajevo to Ilidza, a western suburb due to revert from Serb to government control next year - to the consternation of its Serb residents. The I-For presence, Admiral Smith said, would help to reassure Serbs planning to abandon their homes and head into exile.

"If you are going to move and you have no place to go, staying has got to be better than going if you have I-For," he said. "By being present we can reduce fears by offering a more stable environment." But he admitted: "I can't guarantee the security of every family and every individual." Nor could his forces end the looting of machinery and other equipment by Serbs leaving the area.

The Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegovic, saying the "bitter and cold peace" of Dayton offered hope for 1996, yesterday reiterated his government's suggestion that Serbs in the five suburbs remain in their homes - but did nothing new to calm fears that the government will seek revenge upon those who besieged the city for so long.

"I consider this war to be over," he said in a New Year's address to reporters and members of the ruling SDA party. "It will take generations to forget those who attacked us and the beating we received. I don't think they will dare to raise their hands against these people again... that's why I'm confident this is the introduction to a durable and lasting peace."

Sarajevo Diary, page 13
Jonathan Eyal, page 15

W Wickes SALE

UP TO
40% OFF
CONSERVATORIES,
KITCHENS,
BEDROOMS AND
BATHROOMS.

CUT THE COST OF DECORATING

Master Brilliant White Vinyl
Malt/Silk 2.5 litres £4.99



Grey Marble Ceramic Wall Tile
15cm x 20cm pack of 33 £4.99

Water Resistant Ceramic
Wall Tile Adhesive 5 litres
Plus 1.5kg Grout Free

Terracotta Valencia Floor Tile
20cm x 20cm Pack of 25 £6.99

White Embossed Wallpaper
11 yard rolls £1.59

6 patterns available

GREAT VALUE DOORS AND WINDOWS

"Victorian" Pre-Glazed Interior
Door 78" x 30" £54.99

Glazing panel may vary in design

6" Ledged & Braced
Timber Gate Kit £29.99

Softwood Heritage Cladding £20% OFF

Black Plank £10% OFF

Glazed Hardwood French
Door Set includes frame 1253mm wide £249.99

Berkeley Interior Door
78" x 30" £84.99

Colonial Hardwood
Exterior Door 78" x 33" £29.99

15% OFF ALL MADE TO
MEASURE UPVC WINDOWS

HARD-TO-BEAT BATHROOM PRICES

Economy Basin Taps £59.99

Madrid Bathroom Suite
Excludes bath panels. Available in-store
to take away. (Includes Project discount) £169.99

Traditional Gold Effect
Bath/Shower Mixer £119.99

Aquatic W800 Electric
Shower Heater 7Kw £69.99

Shed and Garage Alarm
Battery operated 1000B siren £14.99

£5 OFF ALL CEILING FANS

WICKES TOOLS -
JUST THE JOB.

180w Palm Sander £39.99

9" Angle Grinder 2000w £79.99

HEATING AND INSULATION

2.8kw Multifuel Plus
CE approved Gas Fire £249.99

15" CE Approved Taper
Inset Gas Fire £109.99

10% OFF ALL RADIATORS

Draught Excluder 15m roll
available in brown or white 99p

15mm Pipe Lagging
Pack of 5 £14.99

22mm Pipe Lagging
Pack of 5 £14.99



UP TO 40% OFF
CONSERVATORIES,
KITCHENS,
BEDROOMS AND
BATHROOMS.

BURNHAM
MANOR HOUSE KITCHEN
£1430.91
£964.85*
FOR UNITS SHOWN
IN MODEL KITCHEN
SAVE OVER £480

1. 1000mm Sink Base
2. 1000mm Corner Base
3. 800mm Under Oven Housing
4. 800mm Drawer Line Base
5. 500mm Tall Larder Unit
6. 850mm Corner Wall
7. 500mm Wall Unit
8. 600mm Bragging Unit
9. 500mm Wall Unit

CUT PRICE TIMBER

Loft Floor Pack - pack of 3
(1220mm x 400mm x 18mm) £4.99

6" Ledged & Braced
Timber Gate Kit £29.99

Softwood Heritage Cladding £20% OFF

Black Plank £10% OFF

CUT PRICE SECURITY AND LIGHTING

500w Halogen Floodlight
(inc bulb) £5.49

2D Dusk to Dawn Light £24.99

White Single Spot £2.99

Smoke Alarms

Pack of 2, battery operated £5.99

3.6v Screwdriver Kit £14.99

15" CE Approved Taper
Inset Gas Fire £109.99

10% OFF ALL RADIATORS

Draught Excluder 15m roll
available in brown or white 99p

15mm Pipe Lagging
Pack of 5 £14.99

22mm Pipe Lagging
Pack of 5 £14.99

CALL FREE ON 0500 300 328 FOR YOUR NEAREST STORE.

W Wickes
EXPERTS IN HOME IMPROVEMENT

SALE STARTS 10AM BOXING DAY
HOLIDAY OPENING TIMES
Boxing Day 10am-6pm, Dec 27th-31st normal opening hours.
1st Jan 10am-4pm (Scottish Stores Closed).
NORMAL OPENING TIMES
Monday-Saturday 7.30am-6pm Sunday 10am-4pm.
Scotland as above except Sunday 9am-6pm

Limited period only while stocks last. All prices include VAT. For units shown in model kitchen. (Manor House range only - excludes delivery. Malt/Silk Bathroom Suite, Kitchen and Conservatory accessories, Berkeley Bar Appliances, Warwick and Salsbury Conservatory tables.

Arafat accepts the challenge

PEOPLE

Yasser Arafat has one challenge so far for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority. She is Samiha Khalil, a 70-year-old political activist and charity worker from Ramallah, on the West Bank.

Ms Khalil, who wants the Israeli-Palestinian self-rule accord to be scrapped, says she can win the 20 January election despite the fact that Mr Arafat has symbolised the Palestinian struggle for decades.

"People are whispering they are not happy with what is happening on their land," she explained, adding: "It is my conviction that the Oslo accords fall short of achieving the fundamental objectives of our people, that of full sovereignty and independence. We want an independent Palestinian state with real sovereignty, and permanent and comprehensive peace can be achieved when rights are restored."

Mr Arafat is reported to be happy about the challenge because he wants a genuine contest. "Arafat does not want the election results to be 99.99 per cent, as is the case with other Arab leaders," one PLO official said.

Before her second marriage last Saturday, Tonya Harding said she was planning a more mellow life. The disgraced ice skater wanted to live on a farm and raise a family. Things started well enough: the ceremony, on a yacht in the Willamette River in Oregon,

was without incident but the aftermath was no honeymoon.

According to reports from Portland, an amateur photographer identified only as Bob, a wedding guest, snapped a photo and sold it to the *Oregonian*. Ms Harding was furious, believing the sale would cause

the *Globe*, a national weekly tabloid, to cancel its \$10,000 (£6,500) contract with her for rights to her wedding pictures. The *Globe* decided to proceed, after Bob, Ms Harding, her new husband, Michael Smith, and a *Globe* photographer met to discuss the situation.

Their talks reportedly broke up with Bob leaving. Ms Harding yelling profanities and Mr Smith jumping into Bob's girlfriend's car, which he said had struck him. Ms Harding gave chase in her car and allegedly rammed the other woman's vehicle. "She just hit us. Bam!" said Bob.

No charges have been filed, but for Ms Harding, who pleaded guilty to conspiracy to hinder prosecution in the 1994 knee-bashing attack on her skating rival Nancy Kerrigan, the fracas is "a remembrance I don't want to have of my wedding".

France, that popular destination of political refugees, has acquired yet another. Prince Norodom Sirivudh, the half-brother of King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia, flew into Paris last weekend, having chosen exile over trial on charges of plotting to assassinate his country's co-prime minister, Hun Sen.

The prince has denied the allegations, but accepted the exile proposal from the King, who said he feared his half-brother might be killed if he stayed home to fight the charges.

Mr Hun Sen and his co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, acceded to King Sihanouk's request that the prince be released into his custody.

Prince Norodom Sirivudh has written to the co-prime ministers to thank them for their clemency and has vowed to keep well out of Cambodian politics.

Leah Rabin plans to write a book about her life with the assassinated Israeli prime minister. "This is the most important thing to me, to sum up this chapter of my life with Yitzhak, the bitter end and the obvious conclusions," she said on Israel army radio.

"It was something I intended to do anyway, even before Yitzhak was murdered," Mrs Rabin added. "I just didn't have the trigger, something to push me especially. Now I have one."

Since her husband's death on 4 November, Mrs Rabin has been busy answering letters of condolence and attending ceremonies in her husband's memory. Thanks to the Israeli cabinet, she will have an office, a car and a driver for three years to help her promote Rabin's legacy of peace.

Maryann Bird

Peki
by d
jail

France
fifth

A warm feeling for washing dried in the jetstream

HONG KONG DAYS

Airports are supposed to be functional, not the sort of place to excite passion. Yet Kai Tak Airport, Hong Kong, evokes tremendous passion among the people who live here. Where else can you be decanted from a plane and, traffic permitting, reach your home or office within minutes rather than hours of leaving the airport?

Maybe it is proximity which accounts for the passion. This, after all, is the world's last remaining international airport slap bang in the middle of town. Now that it is moving far from the urban centre, many of us who love and hate Kai Tak are beginning to feel nostalgic about losing this convenience. Kai Tak would have been even more convenient had it not been for the mind-boggling decision to ensure that the mass transit railway deliberately bypassed the airport. I am told that the chief culprit in this matter was the former Financial Secretary Sir John Bremridge who took the extraordinary view that air travellers had enough money to travel by taxi and therefore did not need to arrive by public transport.

The reality is that the airport is bursting with people, notwithstanding the lack of public transport. You cannot stop people travelling, nor can you prevent the traditional Asian insistence on greeting and seeing off passengers. Nor can even the most blasé of people persuade me that there is anything quite like passing under the path of a landing jumbo jet

while on the way to the office. It is a modern-day version of the excitement shared by closet transporters brought up in an age when there were trains worth spotting.

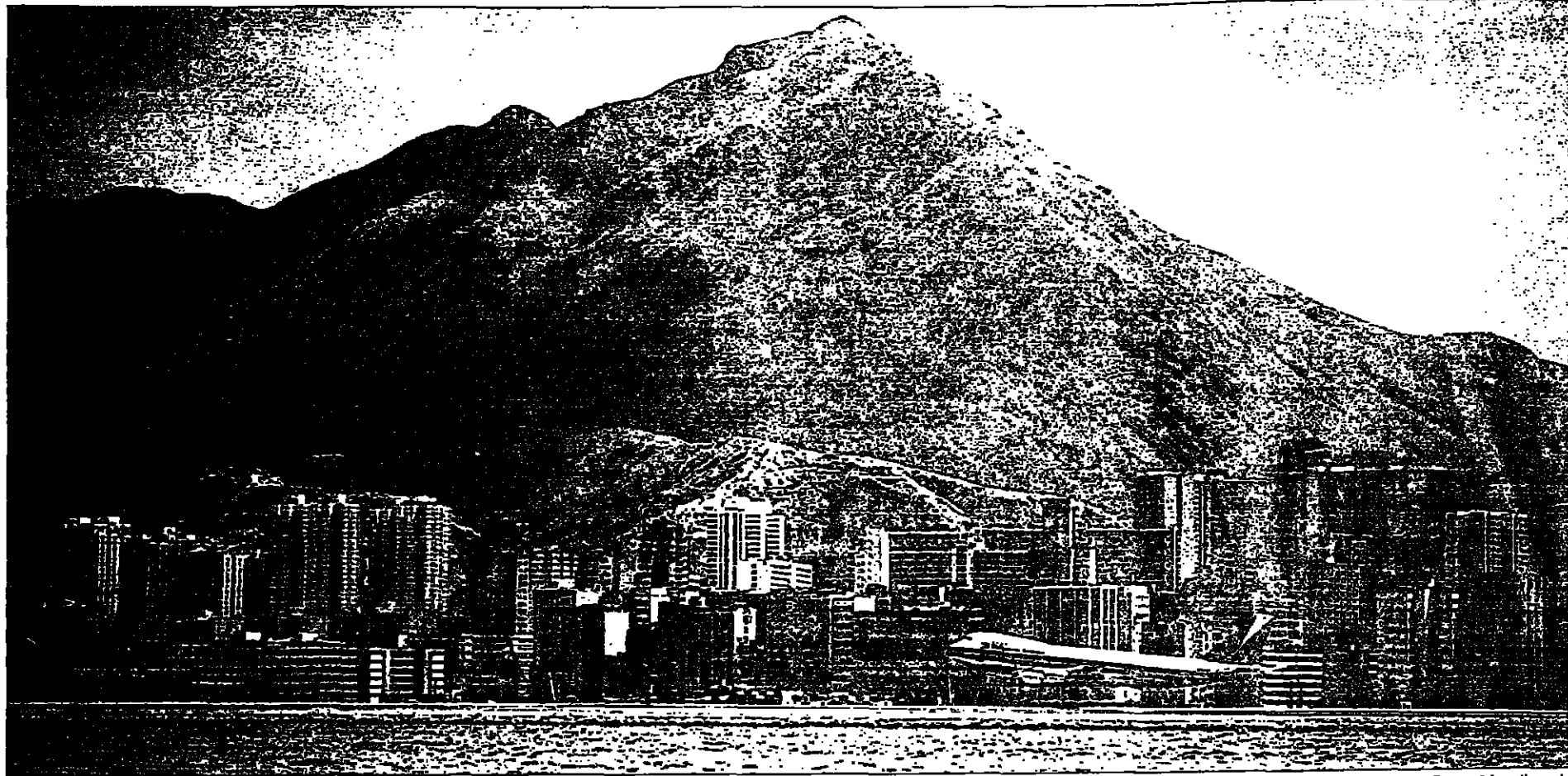
Pilots have to be specially trained to land at Kai Tak. It is a difficult approach, usually requiring a sharp turn before roaring on to the single runway which stretches into the harbour. Pilots say they fly so low over the urban area that they can ruffle the washing drying on nearby rooftops.

Of course, having a large airport in the middle of town is a safety hazard. The surprise is that there has never been an incident where an aircraft has even remotely touched a building outside the airport and only a very few landing accidents have occurred at the airport.

The new Chek Lap Kok airport is now slowly rising out of the water, on reclaimed land, and looks appropriately impressive on paper. It should also be more comfortable.

At least planes will be able to draw up to the terminal instead of parking some distance away because of congestion. At Kai Tak, passengers have to be crammed in the squat buses which shuttle from the aircraft to the terminal building. It is time-consuming, noisy and generally inconvenient.

On arrival the passengers embark on a long walk in the direction of unsmiling immigration officials who all appear to have failed training at the Hong Kong School of Charm but are



Planespotters' paradise: Hong Kong's Kai Tak airport is the world's last remaining international airport sited in a city centre

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

probably no less surly than their counterparts in other countries who seem to vie with each other to see who can furnish the most hostile welcome to visitors. There is another aspect of the old Kai Tak airport, now forgotten by many, which, I think,

somehow unwittingly captured the spirit of Hong Kong.

Some six or seven years ago the terminal building was filled with school children hunched over their homework. They came to the airport because the air conditioning was strong,

the lighting good and they were left alone to get on with their work outside the tiny, noisy apartments where most of them lived. Here was a perfect example of the children's determination to get ahead, finding a place which allowed them to

work and pursuing their work seemingly oblivious to the distractions which surrounded them.

Unsurprisingly, the airport authorities did not view this as a shining example of Hong Kong enterprise: the children

were seen as an unseemly nuisance which somehow lowered the image of the airport and so they were cleared out.

I am confident that the authorities running the new airport will be even more vigilant in stamping out anything similar.

Stephen Vines

Peking stands by dissident's jail sentence

TERESA POOLE
Peking

A 14-year jail sentence for China's most prominent pro-democracy dissident, Wei Jingsheng, was upheld yesterday by Peking's appeal court amid signs that a combative Chinese government has embarked on a campaign to head off international criticism at the UN Human Rights Commission session in Geneva next March.

A spokesman for the Peking Higher People's Court, speaking after the closed court session, said: "The court upheld the original verdict. After this verdict, according to the law, he will be handed over to prison authorities to serve his sentence." Mr Wei was sentenced earlier this month after being found guilty of trying to subvert the government.

Mr Wei's trial prompted widespread international condemnation, but there was no hope of the sentence being revoked on appeal. Chinese trials, let alone appeals, are virtually rubber-stamping processes for verdicts that have already been decided. In 1994, according to official figures, only 0.39 per cent of those tried were found innocent.

Yesterday also saw the failed appeal of a former planning official in Shenzhen, south China, who was immediately executed by firing squad. Wang Jianye was found guilty in April of bribery and embezzlement involving more than \$1m

(£600,000). He was extradited from Thailand in September 1994 after Chinese officials told the Thai authorities that he would not be executed, according to Mr Wang's wife.

The Chinese government these days appears immune to international pressure over human rights abuses, and is adopt-



Protesters in Hong Kong register their disapproval

ing an increasingly aggressive posture ahead of the Geneva meeting. Since 1990, China has faced an annual motion, sponsored by the United States, condemning its human rights record, although these have so far been defeated because China has lobbied support from developing countries.

Sensing that the Wei Jingsheng trial is likely to make the next vote even closer, the State Council yesterday published a

23,000-word manifesto, "The Progress of Human Rights in China", in which it lambasted the Geneva motions as "anti-China plots of the West".

The document praised China's commitment to human rights. Citizens "enjoy various civil and political rights according to law", it claimed. "Freedom of speech, of the press, assembly, association, marching and demonstration is guaranteed," it added.

In a section on the judiciary which Mr Wei is unlikely to have the opportunity to read, the document states: "Those who hold differing political views, but have committed no act endangering state security, have committed no crime." More pertinent, from Mr Wei's point of view, is the line that "prisoners are organised to participate in whatever labour they are capable of".

The Chinese Communist Party's riposte to the West has always been that the country gives priority to economic development and political stability. In the latest document, only one sentence admits to any shortcomings in human rights in China: "Some human rights situations are not so satisfactory because of the limitations of history and level of development."

China published its last cabinet report on human rights in November 1991, in an attempt to improve its image after the Tiananmen Square crackdown in June 1989.

France condemned for fifth nuclear test

Sydney (AP) — Asian and Pacific nations joined environmental groups yesterday in condemning France for its fifth nuclear test in French Polynesia in four months.

Australia, New Zealand and Japan called for an immediate halt to testing and handed formal protests to French diplomats in their capitals. South Korea voiced "deep disappointment" while island states near France's nuclear test site accused it of arrogance. "France is its own worst enemy," said New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jim Bolger. "Its reputation in the Pacific is at an all-time low. When the tests are over, France will have to rebuild its credentials in the region."

The blast on Wednesday, beneath the remote Mururoa coral atoll 750 miles south-east of Tahiti, was weaker than previous blasts, scientists said. French officials said the tests

are needed to develop simulation technology to make future blasts unnecessary. France had planned eight tests but has reduced the number to six, to be completed by February.

"We are now close to the end of this final campaign," a foreign ministry spokesman said in Paris. "We have been and continue to be part of negotiations to bring about a treaty for a complete ban on nuclear tests."

Australia's acting Prime Minister, Kim Beazley, accused France of displaying "arrogant disregard" for a recent UN resolution calling for an immediate end to nuclear testing. The Japanese Prime Minister, Tomichi Murayama, described France's tests as "fruitless".

Pauline Green, leader of the Socialist group in the European Parliament, attacked President Jacques Chirac of France for the blast's timing. "He is trying to rub people's noses in the fact

that in the season of good will he can defy international opinion and order fresh nuclear tests," she said. Britain has stayed clear of the debate. The Foreign Office said that the test program at Mururoa "is a matter for the French."

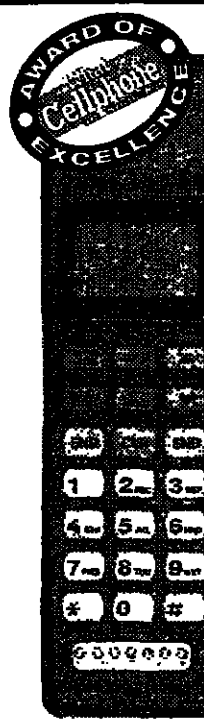
Paris — France will replace its ageing fleet of Mirage-IV nuclear bombers with newer Mirage-2000N fighter-bombers next year, a defence ministry spokesman said yesterday. Reuter reports. The Mirage-2000N has a slightly shorter range than the Mirage-IV but mid-air refuelling could make up for the shortfall.

The defence newsletter ITU said recently that President Chirac had decided to develop a long-range cruise missile with a nuclear warhead that could be fired by the new Rafale fighter-bomber from up to 560 miles. Rafales are to come into service in the next century.

SALE

HALF PRICE PHONES

PLUS UP TO £50 CASHBACK



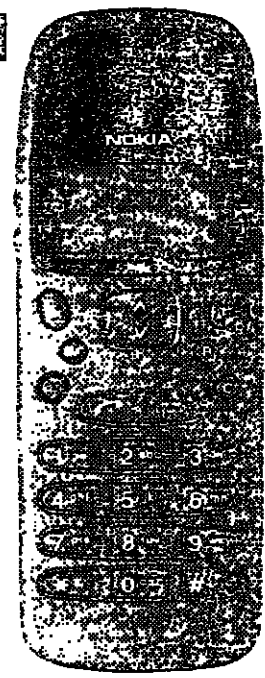
- Slimmest phone available
- Lightweight
- Great battery performance
- Unique budget timer

USUAL PRICE
~~£19.99~~ INC VAT
SALE PRICE
£9.99 INC VAT



- Lightest phone available
- Wide range of features
- Retractable antenna

USUAL PRICE
~~£29.99~~ INC VAT
SALE PRICE
£14.99 INC VAT



- Slim lightweight design
- Large clear display
- "Best Mobile Phone" award 1995

USUAL PRICE
~~£19.99~~ INC VAT
SALE PRICE
£24.99 INC VAT

Our January sale is here again! For a limited period, you can take your pick from our huge range of top brand mobile phones, and pay just half the usual price. And on selected phones there's even Free Connection as well.

And once you're connected to one of our unique range of money-saving tariffs, you'll see for yourself why Peoples Phone have become the people's favourite choice.

But hurry...CashBack offer expires 30th December 1995.

178 Showrooms throughout the UK
For your nearest Showroom
0345 10 11 12
(calls charged at local rates)

PEOPLES
PHONE
Where Talk is Cheaper

Handset prices are conditional upon purchase of a new telephone connected to Peoples Phone airtime (on the Vodafone network) and are subject to stock availability. Prices shown include 50p discount and are subject to connection to any suitable tariff. Free connection on selected phones and tariffs only. Connection is subject to status. Customers will need to provide a valid credit card or cheque guarantee card plus proof of address and bank details. Full details of CashBack offer available on request. Half price sale applies to mobile phones only.

6 REASONS WHY PEOPLES PHONE ARE THE PEOPLE'S FAVOURITE CHOICE:

- Expert, friendly staff
- Wide choice of phones
- 7 money-saving tariffs
- No price rise guarantee
- Free protection from high bills
- 14 day money back guarantee

EXTRA £5 OFF

ANY NEW MOBILE PHONE ON PRESENTATION OF THIS VOUCHER. ONLY VALID WHILE STOCKS LAST.

One voucher per transaction. Valid at any Peoples Phone Showroom. No change will be given.

VOUCHER EXPIRES 30th DECEMBER 1995!

CANNOT BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER VOUCHER OR COUPON

international

Israel finds new ally to stop Iran N-bomb

MICHAEL SHERIDAN
Diplomatic Editor

Israel has enlisted the help of the Muslim central Asian state of Kazakhstan, once a key part of the old Soviet nuclear arsenal, in its campaign to stop Iran from making or acquiring a nuclear bomb.

This unusual alliance emerged after the Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, publicly hinted that Israel was ready to renounce its own nuclear weapons if a comprehensive peace was achieved in the Middle East.

Mr Peres this week signed joint agreements on health, agriculture, investment and the environment with the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, on an official visit to Israel. But the real talking was done earlier between the Kazakh leader and Israel's Foreign Minister, Ehud Barak.

Mr Barak told President Nazarbayev that Israeli intelligence assessments indicated Iran intended to get hold of a simple nuclear weapon by 2001.

He said the Israelis believed Iran was trying to bring in experts from the former Soviet Union and was also involved in negotiations with criminal elements, probably among the various mafias which have sprung up across the former Soviet republics.

Iran denies that it intends to acquire nuclear weapons and maintains that its nuclear programme is intended exclusively for peaceful development. Western intelligence agencies believe that an inner cabinet in Tehran oversees a secret Iranian project to get a nuclear weapon.

President Nazarbayev told the Israelis he was working to curb Iranian influence in his vast, landlocked territory. But

he insisted on the usefulness of continued political contacts with the President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and the clerical leadership of Iran.

The removal of nuclear materials from Kazakhstan, and its accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) were critical security issues for the West after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Since Kazakhstan has now voluntarily given up the nuclear weapons once stationed on its soil, the Israelis calculate that it would be very unhappy to see Iran get the bomb.

The very fact of President Nazarbayev's visit to the Zionist state shows that the Kazakh political establishment rejects the Islamic revolutionary theology of Iran, although links between the two Muslim nations are inevitably close.

Israel, unlike Iran, has not signed the NPT and foreign ex-

perts believe it has up to 200 warheads available for use on its Jericho missile.

But Mr Peres came near to departing from the usual Israeli ambiguity about his country's nuclear resources just before Christmas, when he said: "Give me peace and we will give up the atom. That's the whole story. If we achieve regional peace, I think we can make the Middle East free of any nuclear threat."

The statement caused political controversy in Israel but it was clearly designed to ward off continuing pressure on the nuclear issue from Egypt and other Arab partners in the Middle East peace negotiations.

Israel's position is that it will sign the NPT only two years after a comprehensive peace is achieved in the Middle East, including such unlikely participants as Iran, Iraq and Libya. Arab critics take this as a formula for indefinite delay.



Flags for freedom: Schoolgirls blow whistles as they join tens of thousands of Palestinians watching a parade yesterday to mark Israel's military withdrawal from Ramallah on the West Bank

Hundreds die as blizzards sweep across Asia

While Britain shivers in the cold, bad weather has claimed hundreds of lives in Asia and Africa, agencies report.

At least 99 people have died of frostbite over the past week and many more are missing after a series of blizzards hit northern Kazakhstan, the country's State Emergency Committee said yesterday.

Weather forecasters said winds of 70mph brought down power and telephone lines, lifted roofs off homes and blew in windows. Many people were stranded in near-zero visibility and temperatures down to -15C. Winter snowstorms are common in the Kazakh steppes, used in Soviet times to exile political prisoners, but officials say they have been worse this year.

Health officials in Russia say that nearly 250 people have frozen to death in Moscow over the past two months. All the victims registered since the first death on 1 November were drunk, a spokesman for the city's health department told the Interfax news agency. Temperatures in the Russian capital this month have dropped well below freezing, and have been as low as -19C.

In Bangladesh, a cold wave has swept through the north of

the country, killing at least 50 people. Most of the victims were children or old women. A cold wave last year claimed about 200 lives.

In southern Africa, heavy rains have broken a long drought, but brought flooding in their wake. In South Africa, flooding has claimed more than 100 lives this week and about 2,000 people lost their homes in the Pietermaritzburg area.

The waters were receding yesterday, but a new threat of disease was emerging. "With so much water around, water-borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid are easily spread," Adrian Wilson, an official with the regional water board, told the South African Press Association.

Dams in Zimbabwe's western province burst their walls following heavy rains which pounded the area last week, the state news agency ZIANA said yesterday. Among the dams was Matabeleland North province's largest water reservoir whose earth wall was not strong enough to contain pressure from water flowing in from supply rivers. And more than 300 people were left homeless in southern Malawi after heavy rains washed away their homes.

IN BRIEF

Gonzalez calls early general election

Madrid - Buffeted by political scandals, the Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, called early elections for 3 March. Mr Gonzalez, who has reluctantly agreed to lead his Socialist Party in an election for a seventh time, said he had told King Juan Carlos he would dissolve parliament the week after next. The campaign would officially begin in mid-February. *AP*

Peking freezes out Hong Kong democrats

Hong Kong - China excluded local democrats as it appointed the team which will be responsible for steering the colony through its transition from British to Chinese rule in 1997. The 150-member Preparatory Committee of men and women drew heavily from the colony's business elite. Members of pro-Peking political parties defeated in the Legislative Council election in September were appointed. *Reuters*

Italian PM set to resign

Rome - The Italian Prime Minister, Lamberto Dini, will hand in his resignation to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro tomorrow, Luigi Berlinguer, parliamentary leader of the Democratic Party of the Left, said after a meeting with Mr Dini. Mr Scalfaro has said that parliament must decide if it wants to move to an early general election at the start of next year or if the political will exists to create a cross-party government to carry out constitutional reforms. *Reuters*

Hammer and sickle stamped out

Berlin - One of the last vestiges of Communist East Germany will disappear at midnight tomorrow, when eastern passports adorned with the hammer and sickle become invalid, more than five years after German unity. *Reuters*

Begging the question

Rome - Italy's constitutional court legalised begging and criticised developed countries for turning poor people into social outcasts. Overturning a law which said that beggars could be punished by up to three months in prison, the court ruled that people in need should be allowed to ask openly for money. *Reuters*

Paper chase

Munich - A German security van driver disappeared after stealing 2.5m marks (£1.1m) from his vehicle and replacing the cash with scrap paper. The crime was thought to have been carried out two days before Christmas, but was not discovered until Wednesday. *Reuters*

Gifts of the gab

Salt Lake City - A "boy" showered with presents and offers of a home after telling the authorities he had been abandoned by his parents only days before his 13th birthday turned out to be Birdie Jo Hoaks, a 25-year-old woman who has attempted similar frauds in at least 11 other states. *AP*

Future imperfect

Los Angeles - A grand jury was told that Robert Citron, former treasurer of Orange County, south of Los Angeles, consulted an astrologer and a psychic for investment advice while in office, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. Among alleged predictions was that December 1994 would be a bad month. The county declared bankruptcy on 6 December 1994. *AP*

For your daily requirement of iron, you'd have to eat this much.

Ditto.

You need to eat a variety of foods to get all the iron you need each day. If you're a normal healthy person, a lean, grilled rump steak (170g) will supply you with half your daily requirement. To get the same amount from raw spinach, you'd have to eat 680g of it. That's because your body absorbs at least twice as much iron from red meat than from an equivalent weight of spinach. Red meat also helps you absorb more iron from other foods, including spinach.**

So, unless you have a very big appetite for spinach, what better excuse do you need to enjoy a tender, juicy steak?

Race for the White House: As rivals fall by wayside the Republican Senate leader looks set to take on Clinton

Luck puts repackaged Dole ahead of the pack

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

As a clutch of Republican candidates make their way to Iowa, where a month from now the most brutal election season on earth begins, one question alone is relevant: can anything or anyone stop the Senate majority leader, Bob Dole, from finally securing his party's presidential nomination?

Contrary to most predictions, Mr Dole's position today is even more dominant than a year ago; 1995 was supposed to be the year when one or two candidates emerged from the pack to establish themselves as rivals, but no one has. As the Kansas Senator knows from two failed White House bids in 1980 and 1988, in presidential politics as in life, nothing is certain. But the odds today must be that he will clinch victory within five weeks of the Iowa caucuses on 12 February.

On 20 February comes the New Hampshire primary, then contests in Delaware and Arizona, followed by consecutive "Super Tuesdays" in New England and much of the South. By 19 March, when the big Midwest states of Ohio, Illinois and Michigan vote, matters may well be decided.

In every sense Mr Dole bestrides the field. At 72, he is by far its oldest member. He leads

in the polls with 40 per cent or more, as his closest rivals struggle to reach double figures. With \$24m (£15.7m) in the bank, he is by far the best financed candidate. He has the endorsement of 20 of the 31 sitting Republican state governors - not to mention his role in the continuing fight in Washington over the federal budget, guaranteeing him free media exposure of which his challengers can but dream.

And, just as with any winning politician, luck has been with him. If Mr Dole could have written the Colin Powell script, he would not have changed a word from real life. For weeks in the autumn his declared rivals could but kick their feet in frustration as American politics froze, waiting for the word from the General. In the end, General Powell joined the Republican party, but not the presidential race. Thus Mr Dole was spared from taking on the most popular figure in US public life, who even among conservative Republican primary voters was running neck and neck with him in the polls.

There were lesser strokes of fortune too. A year ago many political insiders believed Pete Wilson, the canny and battle-tested California Governor, was the man most likely to upset Mr Dole. But to universal astonishment, an inept Wilson campaign collapsed almost before it



Reaching out: Bob Dole campaigning at a newsagents in Derry, New Hampshire

had begun, leaving behind a pile of debts and another heavyweight gubernatorial endorsement for - of course - Bob Dole.

Today his closest challenger is the millionaire publisher Malcolm "Steve" Forbes, a man unversed in politics who by common consent ultimately has no chance. Mr Forbes only declared his candidacy in the summer. But his fresh style and "politics of joy" message of low taxes and unshackled enterprise, hammered home by saturation TV advertising cour-

tesy of the Forbes family fortune, has catapulted him into second place.

He may have no chance of catching Mr Dole. But in Iowa and New Hampshire, those traditional crucibles of presidential campaigns past, Mr Forbes has moved ahead of both Senator Phil Gramm of Texas and Lamar Alexander, the former Governor of Tennessee, who were considered along with Mr Dole to make up the field's top tier.

Joyless, grating, and so far a specialist only at winning mean-

ingless straw polls, Mr Gramm is bogged down in a separate battle with Pat Buchanan, the one-time White House speechwriter and TV talk show commentator, for the loyalty of the social and economic right. Mr Alexander, meanwhile, comes across as uninspiring and cheery. In contrast to Richard Lugar of Indiana, the third senator still in the running, who is uninspiring and earnest.

The other two contenders, the former UN official Alan

Keyes and the firebrand right-wing Congressman Robert Dornan of California, will provide entertainment but little else until their inevitable withdrawal. Unless he can lift himself from the low single figures, Mr Lugar too faces a similar fate.

In truth, perhaps the only person who can defeat Bob Dole is Bob Dole. One old man's gaffe, one bout of ill-health, could turn the spotlight on his greatest potential weakness - his age. Conceivable, though less likely, is a fatal display of the celebrated Dole temper, remind-

ing voters that the "kinder, gentler" image he cultivates is but repackaging of the vicious-tongued politician of yesteryear. Most serious, however, is the lack of a message that proved the undoing of George Bush four years ago. Do Americans really want as their next President a septuagenarian legislative fixer, whose pitch to voters boils down to: "Trust me. I've been tested?" But at the start of 1996, as at the start of 1995, the Republican nomination to take on Bill Clinton is Bob Dole's to lose.

US gets tougher on illegal migrants

Washington — Responding to growing public pressure and the demands of the forthcoming re-election campaign, the Clinton administration is moving both at home and on the international front to clamp down on illegal immigration into the US, now reckoned to be running at 200,000 or more a year, writes Rupert Cornwell.

New Justice Department figures released yesterday show that the US deported 51,000 illegal aliens last year, up 15 per cent from 1994, and almost double the figure at the start of the decade. More than half were criminals ejected from the US after completing their sentences. The total of those turned back at US borders almost doubled in 1995, to 4,400.

Meanwhile, according to the Washington Post yesterday, an internal government report is urging the administration to insist on tougher world-wide measures against smuggling of illegal immigrants, many of whom have the US as their ultimate goal. The report notes that alongside the traditional illegal immigrant flows from Central America and the Far East, Europe too is emerging as a principal channel, following the collapse of authoritarian Communist regimes.

The stricter approach coincides with growing demands for curbs from Congress, where bills have been tabled aimed at reducing both illegal and legal immigrants.

The total illegal immigrant population here is now estimated at 4 million. Despite tougher controls, 200,000 people find a way into the US every year. Once inside the chances of being discovered are one in 100.

Stooges' heirs can cash in at last

Los Angeles (Reuters) — A bankruptcy court has confirmed that the heirs of the Three Stooges — Larry Fine, Joe "Curly" Joe DeRita and Moe Howard — own the rights to their work.

Judge Alan Abart's ruling ends years of litigation which held up lucrative film and merchandising deals. The Three Stooges, with a routine based on violent and vulgar slapstick, were a huge draw in vaudeville, television and films from the 1930s to 1960s. Re-runs remain popular television fare.

The original members were the brothers Moe and Shemp Howard and Fine. Shemp was replaced by his younger brother Jerome (Curly) and recalled in 1946 when Jerome had a stroke. He was replaced after his death in 1955 by Joe Besser, then by DeRita in 1959.

Their output included 200 shorts and films such as *Snow White and the Three Stooges* (1961). Fine died in 1974, Moe Howard in 1975 and DeRita in poverty in 1993.

Legal challenges began in July 1993, when Fine's grandchildren and DeRita's widow, represented by Bela Lugosi Jr, son of the horror-film actor, said the heirs of Moe Howard, who owned the rights to the characters, owed them more than \$5m in profits from merchandising and marketing deals.

A court last year ordered Howard's heirs to pay \$4.3m, of which \$1.6m was to go to Jean DeRita, and to hand over all rights to the characters to a company controlled by the heirs of all three. The Howard heirs, his daughter Joan Maurer and grandson Jeffrey Scott, subsequently declared bankruptcy and sought an appeal.

Mr Lugosi said a settlement had been reached allowing for a payment schedule and affirming the transfer to Comedy III Productions, which was talking with Columbia Pictures about a feature film and also considering other options such as an animated television series and a television special.



Comic turn: Joe, Moe and Larry Photograph: Ronald Grant

Arafat faces claims over liner hijack

Gaza (Reuters) — Yasser Arafat has been ordered by a US court to send it written evidence in a civil suit brought by victims of the hijacking of the cruise liner *Achille Lauro* in 1985 or be held liable for damages.

Nabih Abu Rdainah, an aide to the PLO leader, said the chairman had no comment on the move.

The ruling, issued by Judge Louis Stanton, said that Mr Arafat must comply with an order in March 1994 to give a deposition at the PLO office in Tunisia or other location by 15 January or be held liable for damages in the hijacking.

Mr Arafat has denied involvement in the hijacking, in which Palestinians commandeered the *Achille Lauro* off Port Said on 7 October 1985. A Jewish-American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, was shot in

the head and tossed overboard in his wheelchair. His body washed ashore in Syria.

The PLO has said that a splinter group, that opposed Mr Arafat — the Palestine Liberation Front, led by Abul Abbas — carried out the hijacking.

The ruling by Judge Stanton was issued in favour of Crown Travel, of New Jersey, which is being sued by victims of the hijacking. It named the PLO as a third-party defendant.

Ramsey Clark, a former US attorney-general who is representing the PLO in the case, said on Wednesday that negotiations with victims' families were "progressing".

The AEG Winter Sale.



OKO-LAVAMAT 1260 Washer Dryer

- 20 wash programmes including time-saving 'Wash-and-Dry' feature • 1200/700 spin speeds
- Automatic load adjustment for lowest running costs
- Sensoronic foam sensing for best rinse results
- Turbo-drying with reverse tumble action

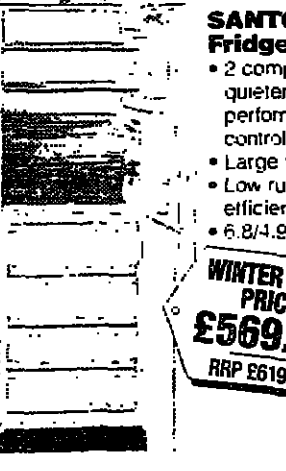
WINTER SALE PRICE £699.99
RRP £799.99



OKO-LAVAMAT 6100 Washing Machine

- Highly acclaimed Digitronic control system for excellent wash results with low running costs
- 19 wash programmes incl. Quickwash and super gentle Wool-Cradle
- High efficiency 900 rpm spin
- Variable temperature control
- Foam sensing for best rinse results

WINTER SALE PRICE £469.99
RRP £529.99

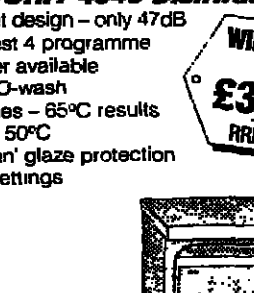


OKO-ARCTIS 2794GA Upright Freezer

- Electronic No-frost system - no more defrosting
- Extremely low running cost - energy efficiency category: 'B'
- 9.2 cu. ft. gross capacity
- Large fast-freeze capacity with sensor controlled 'autostop'
- CFC-free

WINTER SALE PRICE £569.99
RRP £619.99

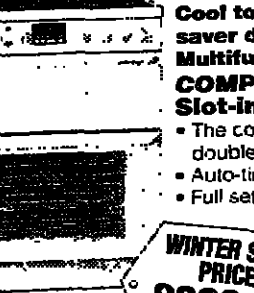
Exceptional engineering at affordable prices.



OKO-FAVORIT 4040 Dishwasher

- Super quiet design - only 47dB
- The quietest 4 programme dishwasher available
- Unique BIO-wash programmes - 65°C results using only 50°C
- 'Care Clean' glaze protection
- 12 place settings

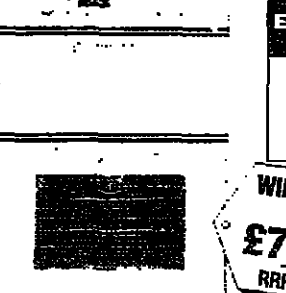
WINTER SALE PRICE £389.99
RRP £449.99



OKO-FAVORIT 5040 Dishwasher

- Super quiet design - only 47dB - the quietest 5 programme dishwasher available
- 5 programme dishwasher incl. Intensive and Economy wash
- Unique BIO-wash programmes - 65°C results using only 50°C
- 'Care Clean' glaze protection
- Flexible basket layout for 12 place settings

WINTER SALE PRICE £419.99
RRP £479.99



COMPETENCE 5210V Slot-in cooker

- The complete multifunction double oven slot-in
- Auto-timer for both ovens
- Full set of catalytic self-clean liners in both ovens
- Ceramic hob with halogen and auto-simmer cooking zones

WINTER SALE PRICE £899.99
RRP £999.99

Available from good independent electrical retailers, selected Electricity Companies and Co-op Societies, Alders, Apollo, Bentalls, Currys, Harrods, House of Fraser, John Lewis, Millers, Power People, Selfridges, Tempe and other leading department stores. For your nearest outlet call 0800 132332.

Advanced Engineering from Germany

AEG

obituaries / gazette

Professor James Meade

James Meade was one of the greatest economists of his generation. He, more than anyone since John Maynard Keynes, influenced the way in which economic policy is now discussed in Britain. He also made a direct impact on post-war policy when as a civil servant in the Second World War he wrote the first draft of the White Paper on Full Employment and the first outline of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Meade's aim was to fashion economics so that it could improve the human lot. He stood in the great tradition of utilitarian political economy running through John Stuart Mill, and his chief interest was the use of economics as a guide to policy. It is largely due to him that British economics has achieved its greatest international distinction in the field of "public economics".

Meade was an egalitarian, both in his ideas and in his life. He felt that economics should concern itself not only with the size of the cake but with how unequally the cake was distributed. For the sake of greater equality one should be willing to accept some loss of efficiency. Thus economic policy analysis required a framework in which any proposal (on trade, taxation, employment or whatever) could be evaluated by first describing its actual results and then assessing their impact on aggregate human welfare. Meade provided such a framework.

His first major field of study, for which he won the Nobel Prize in 1977, was the theory of international trade and customs unions. Meade was of course a free trader. But his volumes on international economic policy, published in the early 1950s, go far beyond that issue. In them he introduced the notion of the economic "second best": if there is an unavoidable distortion in an economy, economists should not just complain but should also say what is the "second-best" optimum, taking the unavoidable inefficiency into account.

From trade theory Meade turned to the distribution of income and wealth, writing the seminal treatise *Efficiency, Equality, and the Ownership of Property* (1964). This more than anything else restated the concern of British economists with inequality. Like many Englishmen educated in public schools (he himself went to Malvern College, before Oriel College, Oxford), Meade was very conscious of the wide differences between people, both in their genetic make-up (he was treasurer of the Eugenics Society) and in the opportunities life offered them. He was worried that technical change would reduce the less able members of society to penury. The only so-

lution was an effective system to redistribute income. In the 1970s Meade's chance came to examine this issue in detail. He was asked by the Institute for Fiscal Studies to chair a Committee on the Structure and Reform of Direct Taxation. The resulting report was a *tour de force* which has influenced all subsequent debate. It helped to propel the tax system in the direction of taxing expenditure rather than income. And it clarified the debate on income maintenance, where Meade was increasingly attracted to the idea of a basic citizen's income.

As unemployment grew in the Seventies and Eighties Meade turned once more to that issue. As a young man he had chosen to study economics because he hated unemployment. In the war he had written the first draft of the White Paper which pledged the Government to pursue a high and stable level of employment. For 30 years they had done this successfully, but now unemployment was back, together with high inflation.

To Meade it was clear that demand management could not produce permanently lower unemployment. The role of demand management was to set the nominal magnitudes in the economy (and especially inflation), while it was the role of microeconomic policy and institutions to determine the level of employment. Once articulated by Meade, this increasingly became the orthodox view, repeated for example by Nigel Lawson in his 1984 *Mais Laissez-Faire*. In Meade's view the best aim for microeconomic policy is to stabilise the growth in total money spending. While this neo-Keynesian approach, as Meade called it, has never become official government policy, governments have come steadily nearer to pursuing it.

But, if Meade's macroeconomics became the orthodoxy, his remedies for unemployment did not. As Meade pointed out, unemployment occurs when wages are set above the level at which people are will-

ing to supply labour. So in his book *Wage Fixing* (1982) Meade proposed that in wage disputes there should be compulsory arbitration with the arbitrator choosing that wage which would lead to the highest level of employment. Although he argued this case strongly, especially in the SDP which he belonged to, it received little support.

He then turned to a different approach, proposing that firms should become partnerships between labour and capital where each worker would receive a specified share of the firm's revenue. To make sure that outsiders were not excluded they could join with a lower initial claim than insiders. This became Meade's final vision of the good society.

In the post-war period Meade was above all a man of ideas. But before he had written the first draft of the White Paper he was an active Fabian and friend of Dalton and Gaiskill. In 1938 he went to work for the League of Nations, in which he believed deeply. From 1940 to 1947 he worked in the Economic Section of the Cabinet Office, and for the last two years was its director. While he was there he and Richard Stone first produced the national accounts as we know them. But his greatest achievement was probably to draft the British proposals for GATT, which led to the open system of multilateral trade and the post-war economic miracle.

That would be enough claim to fame, but Meade's greatest writing was to come. In 1947 he joined the London School of Economics, which he loved and where he probably did his best work. After 10 years he moved to Cambridge, where he completed his *Principles of Political Economy*, which were too taxonomic in character to be wholly successful. The political divisions in the Cambridge Faculty of Economics made him unhappy and he retired from his chair six years early. He continued writing up to his death, inspiring the young associates with whom he worked and respected throughout the profession. In October the Institute for Fiscal Studies organised a four-hour seminar to discuss his last book, *Full Employment Revisited*, published this year. It was completely natural that half the country's leading economists should have been there.

Meade was a much-loved man with extraordinary gentleness and modesty for someone with such a driving intellect. He was in every sense a gentleman. He was a beautiful singer, an excellent carpenter, and a great family man. He disliked pomp and characteristically refused the offer of a knighthood.

As an economist he represented the highest values. He

strove to improve the world by the use of reason, honest argument and accurate thought. On any assessment he was among the greatest Englishmen of the age.

Richard Layard
James Meade was unhappy with the Maastricht approach to monetary union, writes Martha Weale. He advocated instead a parallel currency, which would be set up with a guarantee that it would not inflate. EU members could then choose whether to use it, to peg their currencies to it or to float. A monetary union could evolve without any rigid timetable and, importantly, there would never be a point at which it could be said that the project had failed.

His concerns about the links between monetary and fiscal policy lie in a monetary union resurfaced in his most recent article (in the *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*) in the spring. How would one avoid unstable interactions generated by monetary and fiscal authorities competing with each other?

His students in the 1950s had seen this problem demonstrated clearly. He had supervised the construction of a hydraulic model of the economy by Bill Phillips at the LSE. This model allowed for separate adjustment of monetary and fiscal policy by different people. The result was often that they were soaked with water. Cambridge has just restored its Phillips machine with advice from James Meade. He took great pleasure in seeing it in working order in the engineering workshop last summer, but he was alas too unwell to attend its inauguration in the newly named Meade room two weeks ago.

James Edward Meade, political economist; born Swansea, Dorset 23 June 1907; Fellow, Hertford College, Oxford 1930-37; Bursar 1934-37; member, Economic Section of League of Nations, Geneva 1938-40; Economic Assistant, Economic Section, Cabinet Office 1940-45; Director 1946-47; CB 1947; Professor LSE 1947-57; FBA 1951; Professor of Political Economy, Cambridge University 1957-68; Fellow, Christ's College, Cambridge 1957-74; Nobel Prize for Economics (with Bertil Ohlin) 1977; books include *National Income and Expenditure* (with Richard Stone) 1944; *The Theory of International Economic Policy* (2 vols) 1951-53; *Efficiency, Equality, and the Ownership of Property* 1964; *Principles of Political Economy* (4 vols) 1965-74; *Wage Fixing* 1982; *Demand Management* (with David Vines) 1983; married 1933 Margaret Wilson (one son, three daughters); died Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire 22 December 1995.

Meade was a much-loved man with extraordinary gentleness and modesty for someone with such a driving intellect. He was in every sense a gentleman. He was a beautiful singer, an excellent carpenter, and a great family man. He disliked pomp and characteristically refused the offer of a knighthood.

As an economist he represented the highest values. He

strove to improve the world by the use of reason, honest argument and accurate thought. On any assessment he was among the greatest Englishmen of the age.

Richard Layard
James Meade was unhappy with the Maastricht approach to monetary union, writes Martha Weale. He advocated instead a parallel currency, which would be set up with a guarantee that it would not inflate. EU members could then choose whether to use it, to peg their currencies to it or to float. A monetary union could evolve without any rigid timetable and, importantly, there would never be a point at which it could be said that the project had failed.

His concerns about the links between monetary and fiscal policy lie in a monetary union resurfaced in his most recent article (in the *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*) in the spring. How would one avoid unstable interactions generated by monetary and fiscal authorities competing with each other?

His students in the 1950s had seen this problem demonstrated clearly. He had supervised the construction of a hydraulic model of the economy by Bill Phillips at the LSE. This model allowed for separate adjustment of monetary and fiscal policy by different people. The result was often that they were soaked with water. Cambridge has just restored its Phillips machine with advice from James Meade. He took great pleasure in seeing it in working order in the engineering workshop last summer, but he was alas too unwell to attend its inauguration in the newly named Meade room two weeks ago.

James Edward Meade, political economist; born Swansea, Dorset 23 June 1907; Fellow, Hertford College, Oxford 1930-37; Bursar 1934-37; member, Economic Section of League of Nations, Geneva 1938-40; Economic Assistant, Economic Section, Cabinet Office 1940-45; Director 1946-47; CB 1947; Professor LSE 1947-57; FBA 1951; Professor of Political Economy, Cambridge University 1957-68; Fellow, Christ's College, Cambridge 1957-74; Nobel Prize for Economics (with Bertil Ohlin) 1977; books include *National Income and Expenditure* (with Richard Stone) 1944; *The Theory of International Economic Policy* (2 vols) 1951-53; *Efficiency, Equality, and the Ownership of Property* 1964; *Principles of Political Economy* (4 vols) 1965-74; *Wage Fixing* 1982; *Demand Management* (with David Vines) 1983; married 1933 Margaret Wilson (one son, three daughters); died Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire 22 December 1995.

Meade was a much-loved man with extraordinary gentleness and modesty for someone with such a driving intellect. He was in every sense a gentleman. He was a beautiful singer, an excellent carpenter, and a great family man. He disliked pomp and characteristically refused the offer of a knighthood.

As an economist he represented the highest values. He



'I just play the way I play': Cherkassky in the basement of Steinway & Son, London, in 1994

Photograph: Dillon Brydson

Shura Cherkassky

Shura Cherkassky was a unique artist. To say that there will never be anyone like him again is a true yet incomplete assertion, for there was never anyone quite like him before.

Although he came from a *belle époque* of great piano playing, one where the cultivation of character and individuality was paramount, he could never be termed "the last of the great Romantics" for, in a sense, he represented no other tradition than his own. Asked in 1991 to write a celebratory tribute for his 80th birthday, I found myself chasing quantities as elusive as quicksilver. Pin them down and they wriggled away with the pin. Cherkassky would have been delighted by my dilemma, rejoicing to the end in a life-affirming caprice and liberation that defied neat analysis or a tidy sense of category. As he himself put it, "People tell me I am different, but... I just play the way I play."

Born in Odessa in 1909, he took two years off his age, he later admitted, to prolong his career as a child prodigy. Cherkassky left for the United States at an early age where he studied chiefly with Joseph Hofmann, that master of the inner voice, texture, harmony and rhythm. From Hofmann he learnt that even an outwardly innocent score possesses secret nooks and crannies and, once

the essential groundwork was done (and Cherkassky was among the most tireless workers in the business), the possibilities were virtually unlimited. Cherkassky used this priceless legacy to supreme advantage, demonstrating in the most positive and reassuring sense that you could never fully "know" a work; that, like some multifaceted jewel, it could be turned in the light to reveal a myriad colours and perspectives.

Acknowledgement of such enchantment was always granted by the musical cognoscenti, but wider recognition came slowly, despite irrefutable evidence of greatness provided by so many convincing recordings and recordings. Cherkassky could be difficult and demanding, though even the most frustrated manager or producer would succumb to his capricious charm and his child-like delight in his capacity to conjure a character from everything he played entirely his own.

His repertoire was immense and far wider than his essentially romantic bias suggested. Chopin, Schumann and Liszt were complemented by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven (particularly "late" Beethoven) and Schubert; music he played, at his best, with a magisterial focus and seriousness. A tireless explorer of the modern and contemporary, he adored the

opulent or refined complexities of such seminal figures as Messiaen, Boulez and Stockhausen and characteristically learnt Charles Ives's *Three Pages Sonata* specially for his 80th birthday recital in New York. At the same time no Cherkassky recital was complete without a trip down the byways of the repertoire, without some musical confectionery. His success, in particular, usually included such mouth-watering *filandises* as the Albeniz-Godowsky *Tango* and the Rachmaninov *Pollux*, music he played with an irresistible *clash* and *pizzicato*.

Like many of his celebrated colleagues Cherkassky found the recording studio an uncomfortable setting for inspiration, for the give-and-take, the electricity of the concert hall. And for that reason, and despite innumerable discs, the late Peter Wadland and myself decided to set about capturing Cherkassky's idiosyncrasy "live" and on the wing. The resulting *Decade* series, eight CDs and still continuing, will surely become Cherkassky's finest, "living" recorded legacy, though even here it is surely significant that responses to his performances can shift, even from day to day. Quintessentially, the arbitrary can seem incomparable and, vice versa, a tantalising, teasing mix for ardent and informed or casual listeners alike.

For long a London resident, Cherkassky gave concert after concert in his adopted city, red-letter days even in the teeming life of such a musical centre. His audiences were invariably capacity ones, liberally peppered with pianists who shook their heads in disbelief at that extraordinary blend of charm, *clifm* mischievousness and transcendental pianism. Single-minded and, indeed, obsessive, Cherkassky never taught ("I could never teach, not for a second, not for a moment") and successfully eluded invitations to appear on the juries of competitions, seeing them as venues of the standardisation he so instinctively disliked. Beamsed but delighted by so much recent fuss and attention, he reserved the word *genius* strictly for others, and particularly for Martha Argerich, whose virtuosity provided him with a never-ending source of fascination.

Cherkassky was a true friend, quick to sense both sincerity and hypocrisy. It is an exaggeration to say that few pianists in the history of piano playing have been held in such awe and affection.

Shura Cherkassky, pianist; born Odessa 7 October 1909; married 1946 Genta Gora (marriage dissolved 1948); died London 27 December 1995.



Shura Cherkassky, pianist; born Odessa 7 October 1909; married 1946 Genta Gora (marriage dissolved 1948); died London 27 December 1995.

Photograph: BBC

Jeremy J. Beadle

Jeremy J. Beadle was an outstanding example of a breed of cultural critic which has become more common over the last decade, able to cross the barrier between serious and popular culture. A polymath, he wrote on literature, classical music and popular culture, and his expertise extended from intricacies of the novels of Henry James to sport and television soaps.

Beadle could recall vast amounts of detail on almost any

subject that took his interest. This is most evident in his third book, *Will Pop Eat Itself?* (1993), a compendium of fact so detailed and various one might say that thousands of card indices and preliminary sifting went into its preparation. This was not the case: Beadle's memory was so capacious and his powers of mental organisation so direct, he could draft the entire book with only a few sparse pages of notes in front of him. Beadle published a book on

each of his interests. There are two novels, both thrillers set in the seedy London underworld. His knowledge of popular music was encyclopaedic (he could tell you every no 1 hit for the last 35 years) and it enabled him to confront a subject like post-modernism in popular music in what has become the standard work on the subject, *Will Pop Eat Itself?*

His knowledge of classical music was equally great; as well as writing for *Classic CD* since

its inception, he wrote *The Virgin Guide to Classical Music* (1993), which covers the entire gamut of music history. His greatest love, however, was the music of the German symphonic tradition, and Wagner in particular, and this he wrote on in his book *The Age of Romanticism* (1995), and talked about frequently on Radio 3. His radio play *The Gates of the Underworld* (1990), also broadcast on Radio 3, was about the German writer and music critic

E.T.A. Hoffmann, whose themes of music, love and death fascinated Beadle.

Jeremy John Beadle was born in York in 1956, and educated first at the cathedral choir school, and then at St Peter's, York. By the age of 18 he had written seven novels and a good deal of poetry, but he nevertheless went to Oriel College, Oxford, to study Classics. This interest was to bear fruit later in a series of talks for Radio 3 on mythological subjects, but at

the time he found it frustrating, as his real love was English literature. Having changed to this subject he took a First Class degree, and followed it with an MPhil specialising in the novels of Anthony Powell. One of his last appearances on Radio 3 was to talk about the musical references in Powell's work.

After teaching at Oxford, Beadle moved to London to work first for the GLC and then for the Home Office, before setting out alone as a freelance

writer and broadcaster. He published six books and many hundreds of articles and was a frequent voice on Radio 3. He was also a wonderful conversationalist. He had been planning a new work, which would draw together the threads of all his interests, before his untimely death.

Anthony Sellers
Jeremy John Beadle, writer and broadcaster; born 28 April 1956; died 27 December 1995.

The baby in the manger is ours

Meanings of Christmas

Margaret Hebblethwaite, assistant editor of the *Tablet*, continues our series of Christmas reflections with a look at the family values that Jesus brought into the world.

And children, brothers and sisters" (Luke xiv.26). All in all, Jesus launched an attack on family values such as has rarely been seen in history.

Or did he? Alongside Jesus's negative attack on the old family was a new and positive message couched precisely in family terms. He invited his followers to find their siblings, parents and children "a hundredfold" among the needy (Mark x.30). Though he had broken away from family life, he invited anyone to become his relative: "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew xii.50). Jesus changes the concept of family, attacking the nuclear version in order to stretch the bonds of relationship wider, until all are embraced without privilege or distinction.

Jesus is, after all, in the title he chose for himself and that occurs 82 times in the Gospels, the "Son of Man". We miss the significance of that until we realise it is

more accurately translated "Son of Humanity", or even "Child of Humanity". Translations have stayed with the traditional "Son of Man" merely because it is familiar.

The birth of a baby is a wonderful thing, and most wonderful of all, of course, for the parents. What we are told by Jesus's title, "Child of Humanity", is that at Christmas time we all become his parents. Because Jesus did not come from a traditional family - he was not the son of his mother's husband - he was able to become the Child of Humanity, with no one man, or race, or generation, or sex, taking priority in resemblance to him.

Christians are used to thinking of God as their father, and Jesus as their older brother. Some have begun to think of God as their mother, an analogy that Julian of Norwich explored in relation to Jesus. But the idea that we are Jesus's parents, so that God takes on the vulnerability of being our child, is unfamiliar. And yet this is the good news brought to the shepherds, "to you is born this day... a baby".

Christmas is the time when those who are parents and those who are not find themselves on equal footing. We all have a child born to us. We all have someone to love, who will love us. We all have someone who resembles us. We all have someone in whom to invest our hopes. We all have a future.

And so it is perfectly appropriate that the family is remembered in a special way on Jesus's birthday, so long as the love learned at home stretches out to embrace all who have God as their father. Never were there more religious words for any Christmas carol than "Feed the world, let them know it's Christmastime".

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

HENDERSON, peacefully on 24 December at Plymouth Hospital, John Campbell de Courcy, husband of Margaret, cremation at Torquay Crematorium on Monday 8 January 1996 at 2.30pm. Family known only please. Donations if desired for Alzheimer's disease, c/o J. & G. Perotti, 15 Duncombe Street, Kingsbridge TQ7 1LR.

IN MEMORIAM

LANG-MIDDLETON, Violet. Slipped away and laid to rest December 1994. Still so sadly missed a fine mother, a good friend, and a gallant lady. We were privileged to know you, Elizabeth.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

June, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, musical director and conductor, 82; Mr Andrew Bache, Ambassador to Romania, 86; Sir Richard Beaumont, former diplomat, 83; Lord Beaverbrook, former chairman, Beaverbrook Foundation, 44; Mr John Connell, former chairman, the Distillers Co, 71; Mr Bernard Cribbins, actor, 67; Baroness Denton of Wakefield, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Northern Ireland, 60; Miss Marianne Faithfull, singer and actress, 49; General Sir Robert Ford, former Governor, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, 72; Professor Laurence Gower, former Vice-Chancellor, Southampton University, 82; Mr David Hall, former Chief Constable of Humberside, 65; Mr Roger Hart, Ambassador to Angola, 52; Sir Simon Hornby, President, Royal Horticultural Society, 61; Mr Terry Lewis MP, 60; Miss Mary Tyler Moore, actress, 58; Mr Martin Offiah, Rugby League international, 29; Mr Iain Paxton, rugby player, 38; Mr Peter Robinson MP, 57; The Right Rev Mark Sauter, Bishop of Birmingham, 59; Sir Kenneth Sharp, chartered accountant, 69; Mr Harvey Smith, show-jumper, 57; Mr John Voight, actor, 57; Sir Edward Stratten Williams QC, former judge, 74.

Anniversaries

Birth: Jeanne-Antoinette, Marquise de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV, 1721; Louis-Jean Francois-Lagrange, painter, 1724; Charles Macintosh, chemist and inventor of waterproof clothing, 1766; Christian Jorgensen Thomsen, archaeologist, 1788; Charles Goodyear, inventor of vulcanised rubber, 1800; Andrew Johnson, 17th US president, 1808; William Ewart Gladstone, statesman, 1809; Alexander Parkes, chemist, inventor of a second method of vulcanising rubber, 1813; Karl

Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig, physiologist, 1816; Queen Elizabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva, author), 1843; Pablo Casals, cellist, 1876; Jess Willard, heavyweight boxer, 1881; Vera Mary Brittain, author, pacifist and feminist, 1889; King Emile VIII, Fuchs, Soviet spy, 1911; Robert Chester Rurik, author, 1915; Deaths: St Thomas a Becket, murdered 1170; Dr Thomas Sydenham, physician, 1689; Brook Taylor, mathematician, 1719; Dr James Watson, painter, 1825; William Crotch, composer, 1847; James Andrew, Marquis of Dufferin, Governor-General of India, 1860; Christina Georgina Rossetti, poet, 1894; Octave Feuillet, novelist and playwright, 1896; Rainer Maria Rilke, poet, 1926; Donald Robert Perry Marquis, journalist and humorist, 1937; James Fletcher Henderson, jazzman and bandleader, 1952; Leo Robin, lyric-writer, 1984; The Earl of Sison (Harold Macmillan), statesman, 1986. On this day: the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London, opened, 1730; Sarah Siddons, as Porthos, made her first appearance on the London stage, 1775; an invasion of troops in Moscow was put down after the death of Tsar Alexander I, 1825; Texas became the 28th of the United States, 1845; Britain's first ironclad warship, HMS *Ramier*, was launched, 1860; the massacre at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, took place, when 200 Sioux Indians were killed, 1890; the James Earl Ray took place from Buchanaland into the Transvaal, 1895; Radio Luxembourg started operating, 1930; the City of London was the subject of a fire-bomb raid, 1940; *Life* magazine ceased publication, 1972; an Italian bulk-carrier, the *Marina di Egina*, sank in heavy seas off Land's End, with the loss of 30 lives, 1981. Today is the Feast Day of St Ebrulf or Ebrull, St Marcellus Aldemets, St Thomas of Canterbury and St Trophimus of Arles.

Institute of Physics

The Institute of Physics has made the following awards for outstanding contributions to the development, management and communication of physics:

Glennbrook Medal and Prize Sir William Mitchell, Geoffrey Medal and Prize Professor Edward Roy Fife, Paul Price Medal and Prize Professor John Brian Pendry, Charles Vernon Boys Medal and Prize Professor Richard Edward Palmer, Bragg Medal and Prize Miss Brenda Margaret Johnson, David Medal and Prize Dr Martin P. Scott, White Medal and Prize Professor Francis Edwin Chase, Maxwell Medal, Michael Christopher Payne, Paterson Medal and Prize Dr Michael Roy Worboys, Butterfield Medal and Prize Professor David Vernon Rug.

Appointments

Mr David Tatham, to be British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. Mr Doug McAdam, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Kyrgyzstan (non-resident), in addition to Kazakhstan. Mr Nicholas Jarrold, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia. Mr Graham Boyce, to be Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. Mr William Fullerton, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 3.44pm. United Synagogue: 0171-387 4308. Federation of Synagogues: 0161-202 2363. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-508 1063. Reform Synagogue of Great Britain: 0181-497 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-328 1026.

Family debt and high borrowing are here to stay, but we must find new ways to cushion the personal risks, says Yvette Cooper

How to make the never-never pay off

As January looms, that big post-Christmas question is about to be answered. Just how much did you manage to ratchet up on your credit cards this Christmas? There was the jumper for Dad on the Marks & Spencer account, the toys for the kids on Visa, and who knows what else still to be paid for in the new year.

This week saw the publication of another survey about consumer debt — this time by the consumer credit supplier Beneficial Bank which is launching a new advisory service to help us deal with our burgeoning debts. Apparently, one in four of us will be further in debt after the Christmas spending binge. "This is just the tip of the iceberg," says Bernie Woollard, marketing controller at Beneficial Bank. "Many more will go into debt 'accidentally' and could get a financial headache in the new year."

We are not just borrowing for Christmas. Britons are also in debt to banks, building societies, retailers, credit card companies, privatised utilities and loan sharks to the tune of £500bn. Borrowing has soared over the past 10 years. As the graph shows, the total amount of debt held by British families is actually higher than the amount we have to spend each year.

The question is whether we can sustain this level of borrowing in the future. In the Eighties, heavy borrowing appeared to do. Property prices rose consistently faster than inflation, turning houses into a sensible investment as well as a place to live. Over 10 million households in Britain currently have mortgages compared to only 6 million 15 years ago. And the size of mortgages has risen too. In 1980, first-time buyers on average took out mortgages worth 167 per cent of their annual income. In 1991, their mortgages were on average worth 221 per cent of their annual income.

Mortgages account for more than three-quarters of personal borrowing. But consumer credit — which includes anything from credit cards to hire-purchase agreements, bank overdrafts to M&S cards — has also expanded

over the past 15 years. In 1979, approximately half of all households had credit commitments other than mortgages. By the beginning of the Nineties, that figure had grown to almost two-thirds.

But the "prudent investments" and "sensible borrowing" of the Eighties turned for many people into problem debts in the Nineties. Falling house prices have meant property is no longer such a good investment, and around a million people are stuck with negative equity. Sudden redundancies or cuts in salaries have left many people finding it hard to keep up with repayments on their mortgages and other debts. At the height

By increasing their borrowing in the Eighties, families were only doing what businesses have always done

of the recession, 1,500 properties were repossessed by mortgage lenders every week.

Even today, after several years of economic growth, the overall level of debt held by British families has hardly fallen. Despite evidence that many people made valiant efforts to pay off some of their debts in the past few years, there are more mortgage holders than ever, consumer credit has been rising all year, and there are still a lot of people with problem debts.

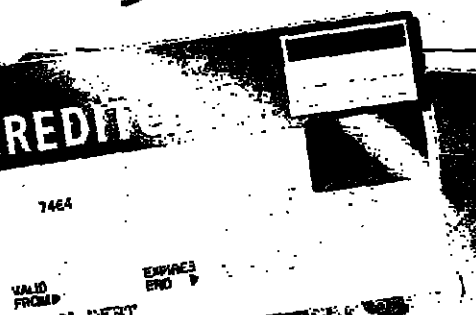
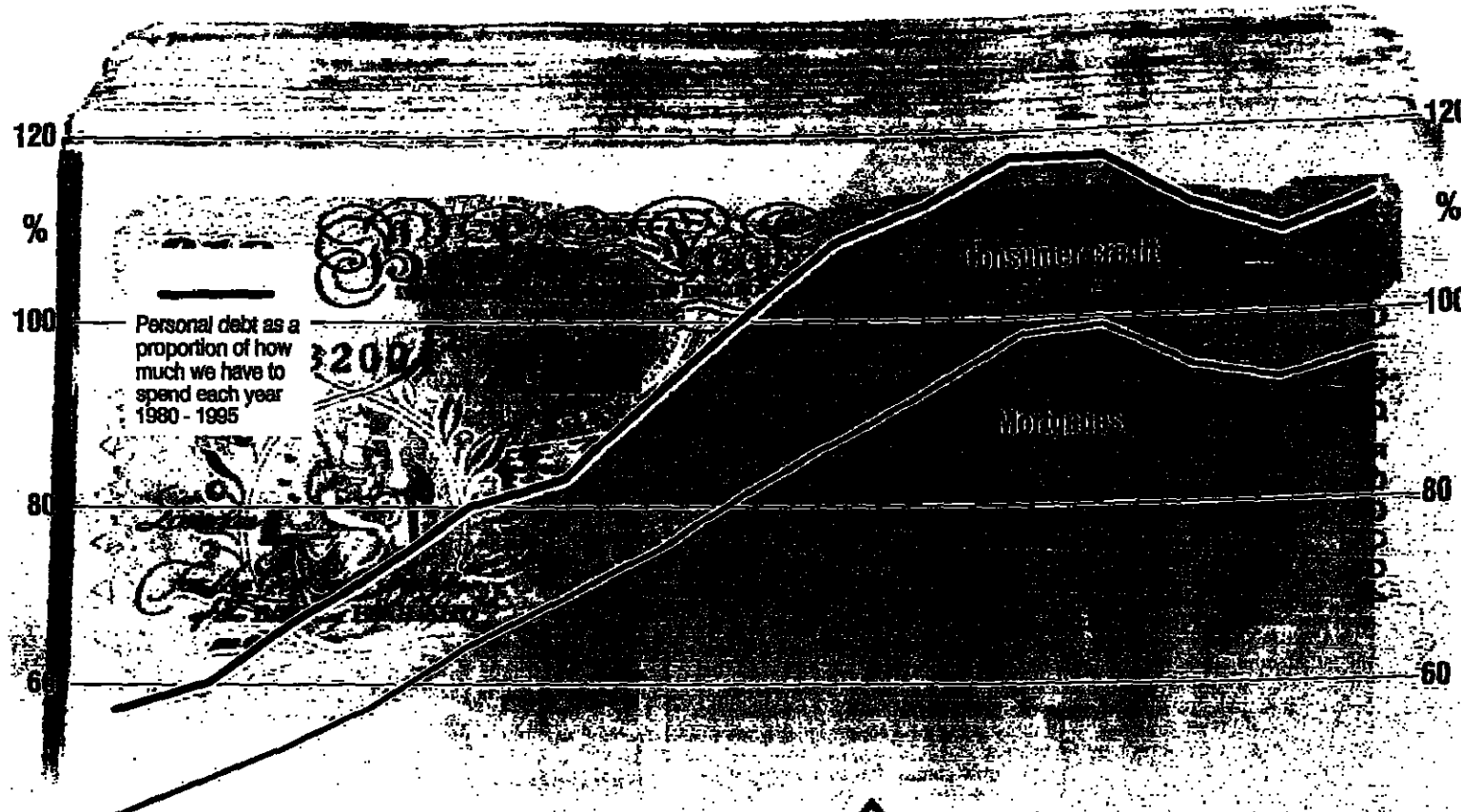
By June 1995, almost 200,000 households were in arrears with their mortgage repayments. And the Citizens Advice Bureau saw around 750,000 people with serious financial worries last year. A spokesperson for the NACAB said that "few of them are reckless, feckless debtors". Many are living on a meagre income and simply cannot keep up with the bills for rent, heating or the Council Tax. Poverty, rather than over-borrowing in the Eighties,

is at the heart of their problems. But for others, sudden unforeseen changes in their financial circumstances — perhaps redundancy, illness or divorce — has left them unable to keep up with their previous debts.

Borrowing patterns may change gradually in future — at least where house buying is concerned. A recent report by Elaine Kempson and Janet Ford at the Policy Studies Institute shows that young people in particular are more reluctant to take out mortgages: "More people perceive there to be a risk attached to borrowing large sums of money, especially as a mortgage." The number of first-time buyers more than halved between 1988 and 1992, although it has started to rise slightly since then. The chances are it will be a long time before so many are prepared to stake so much on housing again.

Consumer credit on the other hand has bounced back with far more enthusiasm. Despite the debts that remain, people seem ready to start borrowing again. Lloyds Bank points out that while in 1994 many of their customers took out loans simply to consolidate their debts, by 1995 they were borrowing for a purpose — perhaps to buy a new car. A spokesman said: "In 1995 there has been more of a feel-good factor. People are definitely borrowing more."

It looks as though there is little chance of a return to the low-debt early Eighties. Even if people could pay back their debts in a hurry, the chances are that many of us would not want to. As Goldman Sachs economists Gwyn Davies and David Walton pointed out in a 1992 report, high personal borrowing across the economy as a whole could be completely rational. Although families increased the amount they borrowed in the Eighties, the value of their assets grew too. So while we may not be earning enough to pay off our bills in a hurry, we own houses or other assets that are worth far more than our debts. In fact, total personal borrowing is only 17 per cent of personal assets. By increasing their borrowing



Consumer credit
27 million credit cards were issued in the UK in 1994
£36 billion was spent on credit cards in 1994
There were 803 million credit card transactions in 1994
£1,137 is spent every second with a credit card
40 per cent of adults hold a credit card
12 per cent of retail expenditure is made with a credit card

- 20% of consumer credit is borrowed on credit cards
- 59% is borrowed in bank loans
- 15% is borrowed in loans from finance houses and insurance companies
- 5% is borrowed on store cards



Mortgages

There are 10.5 million mortgage-holders in Britain
Approximately 920,000 mortgages were approved in 1995
25,200 homes were repossessed in the first six months of 1995
By June 1995:
115,000 people were 6-12 months in arrears with their mortgage repayments
95,000 people were over 12 months in arrears with their mortgage repayments
Average mortgage taken out by first-time buyers: £41,000
Average monthly repayment for first-time buyers in October 1995: £210 pcm
Average mortgage taken out by former owner-occupiers: £55,000
Average price of houses bought in September 1995: £70,000

Graphic: JIM PAULDIS, MARK HAYMAN

during the Eighties, families were simply doing what businesses have always done: increasing their borrowing in line with their assets in part to invest in the future.

The problem is that while heavy borrowing might make sense across the economy as a whole, for individual families it can be a very risky venture indeed. It can be impossible to liquidise your assets fast enough to pay off your debts — especially if the housing market isn't moving. And the house may no longer be worth enough to cover the borrowing. Interest rates could go up and send

the cost of repayments through the roof. And for those facing job insecurity, there is no guarantee they will earn enough to keep up the repayments from month to month.

So how can we reconcile the need for high credit with the growing risk of default? Firstly, people need to be aware of the real risks of the borrowing they take on. Government incentives to enter the housing market such as "right-to-buy" or mortgage interest relief encouraged many people to take on risks they were not able to bear. Perhaps instead government should encourage greater prudence by insisting that people have to save a certain amount before taking out a mortgage.

Another option might be to look at compulsory insurance against unemployment or default on mortgage payments.

Currently, around 1.5 million of the 10.5 million people with mortgages have private insurance. As the welfare state increasingly withdraws from insuring people against bad times, more and more people will want to take out insurance themselves.

And for those who find themselves suddenly out of their financial depth we need constructive ways of dealing with their debts. Financial institutions have already started to develop a more constructive and sympathetic approach towards their debtors than the stark tactics and compounded charges of yesterday.

The Consumer Credit Counselling Service was set up in 1992, funded by creditors, to provide debt advice and debt management plans. Richard Sherris, managing director of the CCCS says, "I think that credit companies, banks and building societies are realising that it's probably in everyone's interests to try and help people to sort out their debts, although it's not necessarily true of all creditors."

High borrowing is here to stay. And there are new calls on personal credit too: investing in education. Most students already leave university with some kind of debt, as higher education expands they may need to pay towards their fees as well. In a world where most people need to borrow at some point in their lives we need to find new ways to help people avoid unacceptable risks, and the misery of personal bankruptcy. Or credit counsellors and debt managers look set for a busy future.

Sarajevo Diary

EMMA DALY



They said it could not, would not work. But the Western politicians who refused for so long to send any real armies into Bosnia should visit Sarajevo to see how wrong they were. The city has changed radically with the arrival of I-For, Nato's peace implementation force. Its limits have dissolved (at least for foreigners) and its front-line neighbourhoods exposed to the light of semi-normal life.

We have begun to venture to places off-limits to all but front-line troops or the suicidal — Vrbanka bridge, where the bodies of Sarajevo's Romeo and Juliet (Serb boy, Muslim girl) lay for days, guarded in death by the sniper fire that killed them. Or the outskirts of Dobrinja, where the enemies were separated only by a road.

But best of all for those of us infuriated, harassed, robbed and turned back on countless occasions, I-For has bulldozed the checkpoints in and around the city. It is wonderful to see the forlorn expressions of our tormentors, the checkpoint guards who stand helplessly to one side as cars sail by. Even the Bosnian truck drivers who needed a UN escort to drive through the Serb-held suburb of Ilidza are breezing through — though they lurk behind the lines until they spot an I-For vehicle passing, then nip in behind.

Most locals — even those carrying UN press cards — are still too frightened to use the roads. It is likely to be some time before they are willing, as urged by the Nato commander in Bosnia, Lt-Gen Sir Michael Walker, to develop a "spirit of adventure" and drive through enemy territory.

And now the cloud of fear has settled across the front line, where rebel Serbs who lost the battle to divide Sarajevo are waiting, miserable and confused, for guidance should they stay, and risk mortal revenge or perhaps just the poverty of a second-class existence, or go to the unknown, to the life of a refugee? The Bosnian government, which will take control of Serb-held areas next year, has called on Serbs to stay and offered lukewarm assurance of safety to all but "war criminals" — though how the average man is to calculate whether his wartime actions were criminal or

not is left unanswered. The tables have turned.

The city is gradually awakening to the possibility of peace and the freedom to move past the ring of steel that encircled it for so long. It is glorious to see lights across the valley at night instead of blackness, to see bars and cafes and streets filled with people strolling easily instead of lurking at sniper corners waiting for the moment to dash across.

Still, there are those wartime problems to resolve first: my friend Aida, for example, is wondering how

to rid her car of the odour of morgue in summer before her five-year-old son and mother return from exile in Germany. A man wounded in October died in her car as he was being evacuated and she cannot wash out the blood.

"I'm trying to make a home for Igor, but more than that, I'm trying to justify staying here to my mother. She has to be impressed when she gets here and the smell of a dead man in my car is not going to help." It may sound callous, but after four years filled with such scenes of horror, Aida herself was not much bothered by the smell.

She is also clearing her flat, moving out the refugees. "There was a 15-year-old boy shot in the head by a sniper," Aida recalled. "The bullet went straight in his forehead, through his brain and lodged at the back. We thought he would die. But after 10 days in hospital he said his first sentence, 'I want tea', and his mother fainted. So the family came to stay for six months. Function after function came back — the last was sight. I came in one day with a banana and a Coca-Cola for him, which was something extraordinary then, and he had never seen me, because I did not know the family before he was wounded. He opened his eyes and said: 'Oh, you must be Aida, you have glasses.' And there was a crash from the kitchen — his mother had fainted again."

A photo from summer 1992 shows Aida wearing pink dungarees and a white T-shirt, a camouflaged flak jacket over her shoulders, a helmet in one hand and an anxious expression. She is unrecognisable as the sassy, no-nonsense reporter I know. She used to come to work in high heels

and tight skirts — "until I broke all my heels in trenches and was reduced to sneakers".

Like most Sarajevans, she was convinced the war was a temporary aberration. "I thought this would only last two or three weeks because the Americans would come in — can you imagine?" She shrieked with laughter. "1992 — how stupid I was. But, hey, it turned out the way I said — just four years later." She paused. "It's funny now, but then I just cried."

The Americans have indeed landed. Residents were benighted to see that US troops leaving their base to walk up the road for Christmas lunch adopted combat positions — but with the memory of the Beirut suicide bombing, security is taken seriously. Troops offered to protect the change of three-day patrols with the soldiers, a practice gloriously known as "embedded media". Sadly for reporters with a sense of adventure, the patrols were limited to... the air base.

Sarajevans are examining the past and pondering how to rebuild the future: some are coming home, trying to stitch together marriages broken by years of war and exile, to reconcile the needs of parents and children who have changed so since the spring of 1992. There is at last a sense of hope, a growing belief that the war really is over, that life can go on — and with it, the prospect of celebs descending upon the city.

"The only one we couldn't put off was the Archbishop of Canterbury," muttered one Nato official crossly. He dropped in last week, though Prince Charles, the Pope, Bill Clinton and Bob Dole all agreed to postpone until Nato had settled in.

Jamaicans admire British sense of rhythm

Until then, there's Glenfiddich to enjoy.



Generation Why

by Tony Reeve and Steve Way



EVERYTHING'S RIDICULOUS. NOTHING'S DONE PROPERLY. JUST GETTING AROUND'S PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE.



BEAN TRACK GREAT WESTERN BEAN-STALK! STAGE BEAN JACK'S BUDGET BEAN



INDEPENDENT

FOUNDED 1986

ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 0171-293 2000/0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2435/0171-345 2435

EDITOR: Charles Wilson

DEPUTY EDITOR: Martin Jacques • MANAGING EDITOR: Colin Hughes
SECTION TWO EDITOR: Charles Leadbeater • SATURDAY EDITOR: David Robson
EXECUTIVE NEWS EDITOR: Michael Williams • ASSISTANT EDITOR: Simon KelnerNEWSPAPER PUBLISHING PLC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
Liam Healy (Chairman) • Sir Gordon Borrie • Ben Bradlee • Juan Luis Ceballos • Brendan Hopkins
David Montgomery • Javier Díez de Palanca • Cornel Riklin • Andreas Whitlam Smith
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Jeremy Reed

Justice from the barrel of a gun

There is supposed to be a paramilitary ceasefire in Northern Ireland. Yet the killing rate is approaching the level it reached during the quieter periods of the Troubles. Four men have been murdered this month. The latest victim, Martin McCrory, was shot dead on Wednesday night. The IRA seems to be responsible.

In short, the cessation of political violence no longer means a total ban on killings by the IRA, just as it never entailed an end to punishment beatings. The IRA is sending out a clear message: it will not withdraw away.

That is the uncompromising message to George Mitchell, the US Senator appointed by Bill Clinton to head an international body looking into what to do about Northern Ireland's stockpiles of illegal weapons. It is probably no coincidence that the shootings began just as Senator Mitchell took up his post.

The IRA has an additional motive for these killings: to retain control over neighbourhoods from which it draws the core of its support. It has singled out the scourge of the community—drug dealers and criminals—for crude justice. Few local people will grieve for them. And there are not many brave enough to argue with an organisation that executes a small-time criminal such as Mr McCrory in front of his three-year-old son.

All of this is terribly depressing. These vigilante killings make it politically even harder for the Government to relax its insistence that at least some weapons should be decommissioned before Sinn Féin can join constitutional talks. So the danger of another stalemate in the peace process looms large.

The shootings should also dispel belief that the IRA will somehow melt away, its weapons left to rust like the guns of pre-

vious rebellions. It aims to remain a disciplined, vicious organisation, unwilling to forfeit its domination of certain communities.

There is, however, some hope. Sixteen months after the ceasefire, the IRA is still faithful to the cessation of political violence. There is no immediate sign that it is prepared to breach that aspect of the ceasefire. The popularity of general peace across Northern Ireland is such that few republicans want a return to 25 years of terrorism.

The only chance for challenging vigilantism and the shadow that the IRA still casts over Northern Ireland requires a long-term strategy, building on the political peace. It demands the creation of a settlement that is genuinely inclusive, claiming the allegiance of all communities, including Sinn Féin. Only such a state can, for example, produce a police force that the nationalist ghettos will back against the IRA. In time, the police should aim to be so supported by the population that, like their counterparts in the south of Ireland after the Civil War in the Twenties, they feel able to disarm themselves.

The Government, keen to keep the peace process alive, seems to be overlooking this month's killings. London, unlike Dublin, has not pointed the finger of blame at the IRA. But this month's killings should bring home to John Major the urgency of seeking a new constitutional agreement. He must press ahead with all-party talks, even if that means circumventing his precondition that arms should first be decommissioned. The present peace, secured without a political settlement—leading to vigilante law and a still strong IRA—is no long-term solution in a liberal democratic age.

A hundred years of fantasy

28 December 1895 was a cold day in Paris. Only a few people paused to take flyers from the man standing on the boulevard des Capucines. Fewer still—33 to be exact—entered the Grand Café at number 14 and paid one franc to see the *Lumière Cinéma*. Together they constituted the first ever cinema audience, witnesses to the birth of probably the most important and influential medium of entertainment and cultural communication ever devised.

One of the reasons for the success of the cinema is, paradoxically, its simplicity. Most of the camera techniques and moves that grace modern film are essentially the same as those pioneered in the early silent days. But what the camera allows, which theatre cannot, is a closeness to its subjects and their emotions and a manipulation of images to achieve a desired result. The outcome is a shared intimacy. And when the story being told is a good one, audiences can share an immediate and powerful experience: they can laugh, cry and experience terror together.

Little wonder that cinema has been colonised by dictators and fought over by politicians. Russian Communists understood its potential in helping to shape the "new Soviet man" and the Nazis in mobilising anti-Semitic feeling. Even in the democracies, film has often been seen as too important to be left to the filmmakers. Thus it was the "fellow-travelling" Hollywood of the early Fifties

which became the prime target of Senator McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee. Today battle still rages about the extent to which film can carry messages that provoke antisocial behaviour.

Far more positive is the way that cinema has constructed a common experience for a world audience. Tales of its heroes and heroines have become a lingua franca and people from many countries can swap lists of their favourite stars: the impossibly handsome men and the ravishingly beautiful women. And it is a collective activity, usually involving sitting down with a couple of hundred complete strangers to see something for the first time.

The death of cinema has been predicted annually. It was said that television would kill it off—and indeed audiences plummeted, reaching a low in 1984. Then the home computer became the projected nemesis, followed by satellite television. Finally, Hollywood's cultural imperialism was set to deal the death blow. It hasn't happened. Film has enjoyed a renaissance, and in the past few months—with audiences roughly double what they were a decade ago—MGM and Warner Brothers have both announced extraordinary plans for major new cinema complexes in British city centres.

Why? Probably because, even in the most atomised of societies, we human beings feel the need to share our fantasies and our excitement.

Q: 1995? A: Delia Smith and Mr Darcy

The end of the year approaches and it is time to find out just how aware you were of what happened during the past tumultuous 12 months. So here for you to mull over during the weekend is our Grand Quiz of 1995!

1. Who, in 1995, said the following?

a. "I am making you Deputy Premier, Michael, but I want it to be strictly understood that it is a purely nominal and symbolic post."

b. "That's all, right, John. After all, I realise that being Prime Minister is, in your case, also a purely nominal and symbolic post."

c. "You might very well think that, Michael, but don't forget that I resigned as party leader and stood for election to show that I was the best man."

d. "Not quite, John. All you showed was that you were a better man than John Redwood, and I think we all knew that already—all except John Redwood, of course."

e. "No check from you, Michael, or I won't make you Deputy Premier."

f. "See if I care, John."

2. Which became the most maddening cliché of the year?

a. "You may think that, I couldn't possibly comment."

b. "Blur? Isn't he leader of the Labour Party?"

3. When Yitzhak Rabin was murdered



MILES KINGSTON

this autumn, it was the first time in history that a leader of a country with a first name beginning with Y was assassinated by a man who also had a first name beginning with Y.

True or false?

4. Delia Smith's name or photo was on the front cover of *Radio Times*

a. Three weeks in a row?

b. Five weeks in a row?

c. Every issue this year?

d. And quite often on the back cover as well?

5. A science question, now. Which breakthrough took place this year?

a. Geneticists finally managed to breed a tomato that tasted of something.

b. Medical science finally isolated the virus that causes road rage.

c. Science has finally isolated the gene that governs people's desire to appear on *The Moral Maze*.

d. The White House finally located

Bosnia on the map.

6. Whose partnership finally broke up in 1995?

a. Paula Yates and Peter Cook.

b. FW de Klerk and Dudley Moore.

c. Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela.

d. John Redwood and Michael Jackson.

e. John Lennon and the Beatles.

f. Pearl and Dean.

g. Torvill and Dean.

h. Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.

7. Which of the following were celebrated in 1995?

a. VE Day.

b. VJ Day.

c. VV Day.

d. Sir Robin Day.

8. To which chemist will nobody ever again take their bath-time photographs?

a. Genetists finally managed to breed a tomato that tasted of something.

b. Medical science finally isolated the virus that causes road rage.

c. Science has finally isolated the gene that governs people's desire to appear on *The Moral Maze*.

d. The White House finally located

9. Sport, now. Jonathan Edwards, triple jump world record holder and winner of the British Sports Personality of the Year title, is actually the illegitimate son of Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards, the British ski jumper who was so bad that he won the title 15 years ago.

True or false?

10. What is the product known as Britpop?

a. A new kind of sparkling wine.

b. An old kind of pop music.

c. The noise made by Britweasel.

d. A misprint for Britpop.

11. Whatever happened to a Terry Christian?

a. David Mellor?

b. Janet Street-Porter?

c. All the money collected by the Thatcher Foundation?

d. Which was the most famous speech in 1995?

a. The one in which Princess Diana said she wanted to be Queen of Hearts, thus losing all the support she had so carefully gained.

b. The one in which Will Carting referred to the people who ran Buckingham Palace as "a load of old farts".

c. The one in which Bill Clinton told the world that he had finally located Bosnia on the map.

d. The one in which John Major told us that the peace process was on course, but didn't tell us where it was on course to.

e. The one in which Mr Darcy finally proposed to Miss Bennett.

Answers on Monday, or maybe more questions, if we can't think of any answers...



Forecasters predict no let-up in global warming

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Two answers to the West Lothian question

From Mr Simon Partridge

Sir: According to your leader "Tartan terrors of Mr Blair" (27 December), Tony Blair plans a new commission to think up answers to the "West Lothian question", which the creation of a Scottish parliament engenders.

It is doubtful that such a commission will find a convincing answer to the question, because the creation of separate national parliaments within the British state flies in the face of its historical evolution.

The British constitution may not be written, but that does not prevent it leaving an internal logic that is based on it being a unified parliamentary system of government. The process started not with the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707, but with that with Wales in 1536. The British state expanded originally from the English-Welsh core until it absorbed the Irish parliament in 1800. The repercussions of the secession of the Irish Free State from the UK in 1922, as the fragile ceasefire in Northern Ireland demonstrates, have still not been worked through.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats, through their plans for assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, seek to reverse this historical process of increasing integration. A closer look at the Irish precedent may be in order. None of the major goals of Irish nationalism have been achieved: the restoration of Gaelic, the absorption of Ulster

or the preservation of a rural and Catholic culture. Indeed, so many have decided to emigrate from the Republic that there are now more people of Irish extraction living in Britain than in Ireland.

There is an alternative to the current proposals for national devolution: it is radical devolution to revitalise local government, formed from the coherent urban-regions in which the great majority of us now live (including in Ireland). Not only does this not raise insoluble contradictions for our long parliamentary tradition, but it also happens to be in tune with the coming world in which the global and the local will have far greater salience. In short, it would renew the British nation in a truly modern idiom—something that should appeal to Mr Blair.

Yours faithfully,
SIMON PARTRIDGE
London, N2
28 December

From Ms Mary Southcott

Sir: Labour's commission to examine the "West Lothian Question" ("Labour may cut number of Scots MPs", 26 December) will be welcomed as proof positive that, despite repeated Conservative accusations of breaking up the UK, Labour, in opposition or in power, realises that power is better exercised and decisions taken close to the people whose lives they affect.

Decentralising the state is important but so is reflecting diversity at every level. That is why Labour is supporting not only a Scottish Parliament but also a voting system that gives representation broadly in line with votes cast.

It is hoped that when examining the number of Scottish MPs, the commission will take evidence on the way they are elected. Any future Labour government, reliant on Scottish or Welsh MPs for its Westminster majority, will be reluctant to leave only English MPs to take parallel decisions for England that in Wales and Scotland will be taken by their assembly and parliament.

With more Labour votes in Kent, which at present has 16 Conservative MPs, than in Glasgow with 11 Labour MPs, the commission will need to examine the way our current thinking is determined by first-past-the-post, which reinforces the representation of the biggest minority party in any area.

Voting systems paint different pictures. Labour's voting referendum gives a chance for the British people to come up with the only long-term answer to the West Lothian Question—electoral reform for Westminster. Yours sincerely,
MARY SOUTHCOTT
Chair, Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform
Bristol
26 December

In the very bleak midwinter

From Dr Brian D. Giles

Sir: When did the Government change the cold weather requirement? You report ("Cold comfort" payments row boils over", 28 December) social security minister Andrew Mitchell as saying, "These payments are meant to deal with very severe weather."

Labour's ignorant prince of darkness

From Lord Russell

Sir: I'm beginning to wonder whether Peter Mandelson's title, "Prince of Darkness", is an example of what historians call "the inflation of honour". The views attributed to him ("Mandelson denies right-wing agenda", 27 December) show an ignorance of Liberal Democrat policy that would be severely penalised in an A-level candidate. For example, the idea of allying with the Liberal Democrats while attacking local education authorities is not in the real world.

If Mr Mandelson wants to know about the Liberal Democrats, he should not rely on his co-author Roger Liddle who, well before he left it, had become a semi-detached member of our party. He should read Paddy Ashdown's conference speech. He would find there not only the famous penny, without which all improvement in education is impossible; he would find also a commitment to oppose Tory tax cuts (on which we have delivered), a commitment to restore Railtrack to the public sector from whatever limbo it may have reached, and a commitment to control the growing "Frankenstein", which is the British executive, by a programme of restoring power to the people (which our predecessors of 1832 summed up as "election not nomination").

These ideas have considerable appeal to Labour members and voters. Do they have any appeal to their leaders? Yours sincerely,
RUSSELL
Liberal Democrat
House of Lords
London, SW1
27 December

Wrong model for UK prisons

From Professor Justin Brooks

Sir: For the past two months I have been in the UK researching the correctional system. I have visited many correctional facilities and have spent many hours speaking to correctional administrators. As a result of my research, I am convinced that the British correctional system is headed in the wrong direction.

Although I am proud to be an American, I am not proud of the US correctional system. Policies formulated at the whim of politicians, focused only on security and punishment—and not rehabilitation—have created the most unsuccessful correctional system in the world. The US incarcerates more of its citizens per capita than any other country and has the highest recidivism rate: there is very little correction occurring in the correctional system.

Even though the US provides clear examples of failed punitive correctional policies, there seems to be a desire in the UK to model these policies. Over the past decade, the US has attempted to build its way out of its correctional crisis while alleged tough-on-crime policies have filled every new available cell. Instead of allocating resources so that inmates will not recidivate, resources have been allocated to make sure there will be a cell for them when they return. I see the British correctional system moving in the same direction, because I have consistently heard over the past two

months about the prison service cutting back programmes that will keep prisoners from coming back to prison, while allocating large amounts of money to security and new prisons.

Locking inmates up without proper treatment, educational programmes, vocational training, support for their families, and concern for their transition back into the community is clearly the quickest route to a violent crime-ridden society, and an outrageously expensive correctional system. One need not be altruistic to believe that offering inmates opportunities is a good idea. It is much cheaper to pay for inmate programmes than it is to pay for a population of individuals who spend their lives shuffling in and out of the criminal justice system, while the taxpayers are probably also supporting their families.

I believe that the British correctional system can turn itself around before it becomes as failed as the US system. I have met many excellent civil and progressive administrators who, given the resources, clearly have the ability. It is time now to formulate policies from the top that allow the operation of true "correctional" facilities, not just prisons.

Yours sincerely,
JUSTIN BROOKS
Sheffield, Yorkshire
20 December
The writer is an associate professor at the Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan.

Common sense and monetary union

From Mr J. M. Mackay

Sir: I was most interested to read Hamish McRae's article (22 December) about the impracticalities of monetary union, but I think even more fundamental is the question of parliamentary control thereof. Policies very largely about the economy and taxation, which vitally concern the currency, I cannot imagine that we would ever accept the decisions of a hostile European parliamentary majority against our interest in such matters.

Yours faithfully,
J. M. MACKAY
Bournemouth, Hampshire
21 December

Sharp practice

From Ms Catherine Moody

Sir: Your headline "Straw urges action on knife adverts" (23 December) prompts the reflection that if manufacturers of kitchen equipment would stop making kitchen knives with a point, much less damage might be done.

To enhance a macho image in chefs, both male and female, is one thing, but to make a knife about all a pointed kitchen knife can do. A blunt-ended knife is better for spreading, an oblique end acts as a turner and a convex blade is wanted to cut up butter in a bowl for making pastry.

In the hand of the excited or violent, a stab can mean death. A round-ended kitchen knife, on the other hand, refuses to be such an efficient accessory. Why not design a knife that is handy for cooking and not for death? It would also be safer while you dash about the kitchen, just cooking. Yours faithfully,
CATHERINE MOODY
Malvern, Worcestershire

Communists get streetwise

From Mr N. I. Barnes

Sir: Not long ago, new street-name signs were put up on the *Nevsky Prospect* in St Petersburg. They bear three lines of text: the first reads "Nevsky Prospect" in Russian letters, the second the same in Latin letters, the third line reads, also in Latin letters, "Coca-Cola".

Communist successes in the recent elections ("Red flag is raised over Russia again", 19 December) should not surprise. Yours faithfully,
N. I. BARNES
London, NW8
26 December

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number (Fax 0171-293 2056; e-mail address: letters@independent.co.uk). Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

comment

In fear of living dangerously

We have become a society of strangers, in which trouble lurks around every corner



HELEN WILKINSON

Just when it looked as if everything was shaping up for a perfect White Christmas, brutal reality barged back in with the reports on radio and television of the disappearance of 19-year-old Celine Figard, last seen being picked up by a lorry driver at a motorway service station a few days before Christmas, as she hitched her way to spend the holidays with her cousin. As every day goes by, the fears for her grow and the police were worried enough to raise the status of their inquiry to a murder investigation, so turning her smiling face into a symbol of youthful trust betrayed by a dangerous society.

Already, many are drawing what they take to be the obvious moral. You can't trust anyone. Strangers are dangerous and only a fool would choose to hitch, deliberately laying themselves open to psychopaths and weirdos. This is a predictable response and an understandable one. We have a culture that extols the virtues of free-

Any kind of chance encounter with people in cars can seem like the ultimate danger

dom and choice, yet we seem to find them inherently destabilising. Rising mobility and the accompanying erosion of communities and neighbourhoods seem to have ushered in a society of strangers. Greater freedom has been accompanied by rising crime, especially violent crime, which heightens insecurity, fuels paranoia and creates a crisis of trust. People are becoming ever more concerned about personal safety and have become obsessed with eliminating risks.

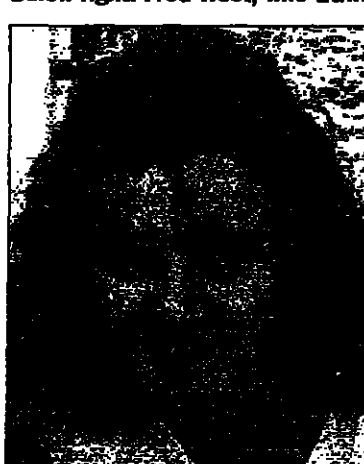
We seem to yearn for controlled environments: whether shopping in malls such as Lakeside in Thurrock or Meadowhall in Sheffield, which have closed-circuit television cameras, stable temperatures and no rain; on holiday in places such as Centre Parks and Disneyland, where leisure is organised within clearly defined parameters; or on package holidays, where there's always someone in charge (and someone to complain to). Risks to our bodies are eliminated, for example, by not eating beef because of a million-to-one chance that we might contract CJD, and those who like to live dangerously do it through organised activities like bungee jumping which look hazardous but are, in fact, almost wholly safe.

In this context, any kind of chance encounter with people in cars can seem like the ultimate danger. It's certainly provided good material for popular culture, with films like *The Hitcher* and



Bungee jumping on the dangers of the road, as well as cleverly inverting the power relationship between hither and driver by making the hither the murderer. Public anxiety about hitching has also been raised by real life events. In the macabre tale of Cromwell Street, the fact that Frederick West hunted his victims by crawling the streets at night, finding damsels in distress and offering them a lift and a bed for the night, was a stark reminder of the horrors that await if you accept lifts from strangers. What makes matters worse is that West's story seemed to disprove the commonly accepted rules for minimising risk. The women who accepted lifts from Frederick West were not stepping into a car late at night with a lone man; more often than not, Rosemary West was present, able to reassure the victims that they would be safe precisely because she was a woman.

Over the airwaves, in print, on celluloid and on television, there is a consistent message: the world has become such a dangerous place that we dare not risk chance encounters. Everyone is a potential psychopath, every lorry driver a potential Peter Sutcliffe. Predictably, another bad hitching episode now means that in pubs and on talk shows around the country people are lining up to call for an out and out ban on hitching. Others are calling on hitchhikers to stop hitching, and on drivers to "just say no". The message to drivers seems to be that you've got to be cruel to be kind; better to drive past a rain-soaked woman standing by the roadside than pick her up because that



will send the message that it's not worth trying to hitch in the first place. Doubtless many parents who fear for their own children's safety will feel that this is only common sense. Yet the moral that is being drawn is surely wrong. This is partly a matter of proportion and partly a matter of the impossibility of avoiding strangers. The number of hitchhikers who are seriously hurt remains minuscule and while many have less than pleasant experiences, particularly if they are single women, that's true of many other things we do in life, such as walking down a street late at night, driving a car on lonely stretches of road or stepping into a car with a person purport-



ing to be interested in buying a house, as the estate agent Suzy Lamplugh did. True, we can try to insure against the risks. We can do self-defence classes, we can try to avoid walking home at night or we can splash out on a mobile phone for the car. We can follow the advice of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust – the charity set up after her disappearance to educate other women on personal safety – which has significantly concentrated its efforts on arming and equipping women with safety techniques to minimise risks, not on prescribing yet further limits on women's freedom. Yet, however much we do all of this there will always be some of us who, because of money, or because we

have been caught off our guard, will still run into dangers.

Moreover, while we can try to avoid the possibility of chance encounters, we can never truly eliminate the risk of them – even in the most controlled environments. It's worth remembering that Jamie Bulger was led to his death from a video-monitored shopping centre and that the technology may have helped to catch his attackers, but it did not save his life. And while we invest thousands in burglar alarms to secure our homes, we still don't feel entirely safe from random attacks.

But the more serious flaw in the arguments of those who want to screen away all risks is that even if we could buy our way to safety we would be so aware of all the dangers that life wouldn't be much fun anyway. We would be alive but psychically dead, victims of our own anxieties and our own self-created prisons. Moreover, an organised, predictable world – one without risks and without chance encounters – would be a very boring one. So those of us who actually welcome the benefits of greater freedom – the opportunity to travel, to meet people from all walks of life and to be more mobile than we have ever been – should be prepared to embrace some risks while also learning to be careful and streetwise. Indeed, a degree of risk-taking is one of the ways in which young adults learn the survival techniques they will need throughout their lives. And in the final analysis, how many of us at any age would really be happy in a society where everything was controlled and predictable?

Jack of all trades – and all classes

Goodbye Tracy and Wayne, says Ruth Picardie. Today's parents have other aspirations for their kids

It's one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. You muse idly on the subject for years, argue bitterly for nine months, agonise for weeks. Hundreds are rejected. A handful make the shortlist. Then, at last, you and your partner agree – on a name for your new baby.

It's also probably the biggest statement you'll ever make about who you are and where you're going.

So, Gabriel is rejected as too biblical, Nathaniel (too American), Raphael too effeminate. But how about Jack? A solid, unpretentious name belonging to a cute, sturdy boy and a good, strong kind man – Jack the Giant Killer.

When he grows up, he'll be sexy and alluring and just the right side of rock'n'roll, like Jack Nicholson, or the firstborn of beautiful people such as Gabriel Byrne and Ellen Barkin.

Sadly, your son Jack will be in a class of Jacks. According to figures just released by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Jack was the most popular boys' name in 1995. It is closely followed by Daniel, Thomas (last year's number one), James, Joshua and Matthew.

The top girls' names, meanwhile, are Jessica, Lauren, Rebecca (last year's number one), Sophie and Charlotte.

This is shocking stuff, not just for the parents of baby Jack. For where are the Sharons and Tracys, who once inhabited every Essex joke? Where are the Waynes and Waynetas, inventions of that skilful social satirist, Harry Enfield? Where, in short, are the modern working-class names?

Where, too, are the soap wannabes and aspirant starlets?

The only starry name to make the top 100 is Jodie (46), as in Foster – a conspicuously brainy film star who went to Yale. These days, the rich and famous have all been Oprah Winfrey, exposed as sexual abusers, alcoholic, bulimic, too screwed up to emulate.

What the new top 50 says about the values, fears and aspirations of mid-Nineties Britain is, first, not that we live in John Major's classless society, but that today nobody wants to be working class.

Girls will still smoke in the toilets and get pregnant in their teens, but at least they'll have an exotic name like Jade (number 19).

Mid-Nineties Britons want their daughters to be frilly and ultra-feminine, demure and rather posh – Jessica and Sophie and Charlotte – and definitely not strong, achieving types (Margaret does not make the list).

Actually, they would quite like their daughters to be Victorian – an era when parents really did stick to a proper class of names. They can either be parlour maids – Amy (7) and Molly (47) – or demure little girls such as Alice (18) and Grace (41).

Cutting-edge parents call their daughters Elsie (straight in at 40) and Abbie (new at 44 – morsugar and spice, from the days when little girls wore long hair and dresses and weren't seen and not heard. Feminism? Forget it. The original version of these little girls didn't even get the vote.

Where are the Sharons who once inhabited every Essex joke?

The other new girls' entry is Kayleigh, which sounds suspiciously like Kylie but is in fact one of those faux-Celtic names that have ripped through the boys' chart like the wind up kites.

Racing up the charts are Liam (up five places to number 12) joining Connor (17), Calum (23), Kieran (26) and Sean (44). Cameron (new in at 48) and Reece (another new entry at 48) – and this has nothing to do with Scottish and Northern Irish fertility rates, since the chart only applies to England and Wales.

While England has become a grey place led by a grey mar (though John does appear a number 39, and Tony is nowhere), the nation's parents hope for wild, macho, independent, heather-scratched sons who doubtless will want to have nothing to do with their frilly Victorian daughters.

Silly, aren't we. Perhaps that's why, this year, hoping for a New Man and a feminist, named my baby son Joe – a solid Biblical carpenter type – and my daughter Lola – a floozy straight out of a Kink number 19).

A region with a bad reputation

The West can only achieve peace in Bosnia if it changes its policies in the Balkans, says Jonathan Eyal

The first stage in the disengagement of troops around the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo has begun as promised. Although pitfalls abound, hopes are rising that Nato will ultimately meet its primary objective of pacifying the republic of Bosnia. Yet stability in the entire Balkan region requires more than just a military operation in one former Yugoslav state. It needs a long-term commitment that combines economic assistance with political engagement and a great deal of patience, an effort that no Western government is currently prepared to consider. For, as the success of Islamic parties in this week's Turkish parliamentary elections indicates, the West may find itself dousing the flames of one Balkan conflict only to be confronted with many another regional crisis.

As the clash point between three former empires, the Balkans seemed almost destined to symbolise trouble. Constantly shifting borders and people as well as unspeakable cruelty have all given the region its bad name. "Balkanisation", the perpetual disintegration of states into smaller entities, is now more famous as a concept than the individual countries the region encompasses. The recent Yugoslav war has rekindled all these historic fears. In most of Europe the Balkans are now regarded as a zone of perpetual instability, a region best left outside the Continent's co-operation structures. Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics and Hungary are considered as serious candidates for membership in both the European Union and Nato. But at the EU summit in Madrid last week, the case of Romania, Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey were met with ominous silence. Yet the West's assumption that the Balkan states should solve their problems before, rather than after, joining European institutions has little chance of success.

Much of Europe's reticence about the area is misconceived; the view that the Balkans represent a disease rather than merely a geographic entity is based on a fundamental misreading of history. While it is true that the region has had more than its fair share of violence, it is also a fact that much of this was engineered by competing alliances hatched in the West, rather than just local animosities.

Nor is it true that the Balkans are still torn by "tribal warfare" today; former Yugoslavia is a unique case of a multi-ethnic state that failed. In no other Balkan country do ethnic minori-



Pro-Kurdish rallies are just one sign of increasing fragmentation in Turkish politics. AFP

ties represent more than 10 per cent of the population and none of the minority disputes in the region can be solved by changing frontiers. "Balkanisation" is a Western nightmare, based on a fatal misunderstanding of the past rather than an Eastern reality.

Finally, the region has displayed a genuine desire to forget its turbulent history: refusing to engage in any regional disputes, Bulgaria and Romania have become friendly with both Greece and Turkey, precisely what the rest of Europe did not expect them to do. And the best co-operation between Romania and Hungary is on the military level, exactly what nobody in Europe imagined. Yet all the Balkan countries suspect that, however hard they try, the West is ultimately interested merely in ignoring them.

Albania has heeded Western demands to keep out of the Yugoslav war. The Western response is to advocate that Serbia retains control over the ethnically Albanian region of Kosovo, while granting the local population "autonomy", a meaningless compromise in which nobody believes.

for a few months. It does not matter that Jordan originally supported Saddam Hussein. Iraq's dictator, while Turkey was an ally of the West; the Americans needed Jordanian co-operation in the conclusion of a peace settlement with Israel, while Turkey's friendship was simply taken for granted.

To make matters worse, the end of Communism brought stability to Central Europe but not to the Continent's peripheries. One after another, the former Soviet republics of central Asia, such as Azerbaijan, populated by nations ethnically related to the Turks, have been forced back under Russian influence, with the West not only ignoring these developments but actually preparing to allow Russia to maintain more troops on Turkey's frontiers than the limits laid down under international agreements that Moscow agreed a few years ago. But, far from seeking to reassure Turkey about its own security, the West criticised the Turkish government for its breaches of human rights and imposed visa requirements on Turkish passport holders. The result was the rise this week of an Islamic fundamentalist party which capitalised on this frustration with the West by promising Turkey's withdrawal from Nato.

On paper, the West has all the mechanisms for engaging in the region: a new free trade accord will enter into force with Turkey this January, while Bulgaria and Romania have co-operation accords with both the EU and Nato. But the difficulty is that all these promises carry increasingly diminishing conviction, given the West's record in the region over the past few years.

For centuries, the West has laboured under the mistaken notion that it was able to choose just how much or, usually, how little, it should become involved in the Balkans. If this effort is accompanied by co-operation and real promises of integration to the other neighbouring states, Nato's Bosnia adventure will be a success. But if the West persists in its concentration on Bosnia alone, it will quickly discover that the Balkans are good at burying the best of intentions. The task today is no longer just keeping Bosnia at peace but pacifying an entire region.

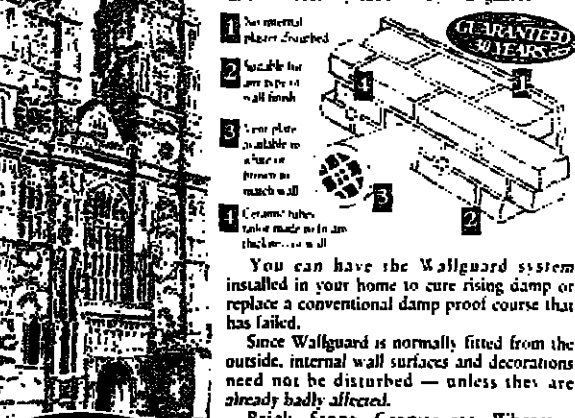
The writer is director of studies at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

RISING DAMP?

CURE IT PERMANENTLY WITH WALLGUARD

A SYSTEM PROVEN IN PRACTICE FOR OVER 60 YEARS

The Wallguard ceramic tube system of damp removal and prevention has been in use in ancient and famous buildings for many years. A prime example is Westminster Abbey in which the system was first fitted in 1952 – and was recently added to by Wallguard.



You can have the Wallguard system installed in your home to cure rising damp or replace a conventional damp proof course that has failed.

Since Wallguard is normally fitted from the outside, internal wall surfaces and decorations need not be disturbed – unless they are already badly affected. Brick, stone, granite etc. Whatever thickness of wall we can do it.

Local Authority & Building Society Approved

NO MAINTENANCE NO MESS NO FUSS

Also ask about our condensation and mould control service.

PHONE US FREE ON 0800 508608

— no postage required to: Wallguard Manchester M16 5BH.

☐ My chemical injection has failed ☐ No existing damp proof course

☐ Conventional damp proof course has failed ☐ Condensation Control

☐ I would like to eliminate damp once and for all

Name _____ Address _____

Telephone _____ Postcode _____

Send To: WALLGUARD, FREEPOST MR 8787, Manchester M16 5BH.

The excess shareholdings were sold to the public by Granada and Carlton of LWT and Central respectively, which took the two acquiring companies from 18 per cent to 36 per cent of ITN. Several ITV companies – including Yorkshire Television, Anglia Television and HTV – expressed an interest in buying the shares but balked at the asking price.

Privately, Granada and Carlton have been criticised for assigning by some ITV companies to encourage a second news provider to be designated by the ITC. Under the rules, only recognised news providers can be designated, and there are only 12 companies. Currently, ITN supplies all ITV news, including its flagship *News At 10*, featuring

ply news for about £30m a year, far less than the current ITN contract, which is worth £55m a year.

The Carlton spokesman said: "It is our intention to correct the situation quickly, adding that we "note the ITC's concern."

The ITC, however, remained doubtful that the companies would be called on the Government to "address avoidance mechanisms of this kind" in the new Broadcasting Bill, due to be debated in the next session of Parliament.

The regulator also seeks greater discretion in defining the acceptability of ownership structures in a range of situations, such as the sale of ITV licences to a variety of innovative, but perfectly legal, ownership structures, were put in place by

Japan bounces but may still not be on the ball



COMMENT

One explanation for the revival in recent weeks lies in the first green shoots of economic recovery, confirmed by an unexpectedly high rise in industrial output for November

Is it different this time round or is what we are witnessing merely that traditional Japanese annual event – an unsustainable stock market bounce? For those who missed it, the Nikkei struggled through the 30,000 mark earlier this week, as it has done at some stage every year since 1992 – cold comfort for the former Barings trader Nick Leeson who back in February gambled the Nikkei would be above 19,500 at the end of the year. Unfortunately for him, it collapsed back down to 14,485 before the present recovery set in. Though the rise in the Tokyo market since its mid-year low point looks spectacular – nearly 50 per cent – this is nothing unusual by Japanese standards. Volatility comes with the territory in a market where the average dividend yield is less than 1 per cent.

One explanation for the revival in recent weeks lies in the first green shoots of economic recovery, confirmed by an unexpectedly high rise in industrial output for November. Government efforts to nurture growth seem finally to be bearing fruit. A second factor behind the unfolding confidence in equities has been the growing willingness of the Japanese authorities to own up to the extent of the banking crisis. The Bank of Japan has put a figure on estimated bad debts, closed down some no-hope financial institutions and set out plans for tougher monitoring of Japanese banks in future. Investors feel they now more or less know the scope of the problem and the nature of the solutions.

Underpinning all this are high liquidity levels – lots of cash chasing any investment prepared to pay more than a token return. Domestic investors figure interest rates can go no lower, leaving little scope for Japanese bond prices to rise. They are therefore allocating more to shares. Overseas investors too are increasingly confident both that the Nikkei has more scope to rise than key alternative markets – such as Wall Street – and that there is little danger of an adverse movement in the yen. The effect could be to push the Nikkei well above 20,000 before the new year is very old.

Whether such a bounce can be justified by the fundamentals – prospects for Japan – is another matter. It will be public sector pump-priming rather than private sector demand that drives the economy in 1996. Corporate earnings should improve, but not by a lot. Japan's transition, moreover, from a spectacularly high growth tiger-type economy to a disappointingly sclerotic one in need of very substantial structural change makes the present still-high valuations enjoyed by Japanese shares relative to their Western counterparts look increasingly unsustainable.

Markets rarely behave entirely rationally so it will take time for this underlying anomaly to correct itself. The stock market in Japan is in any case such an integral part of the financial and industrial system that the sort of correction implied by the relative valuation analysis would mean ruin for

investors and bankers alike. There is therefore a powerful in-built resistance to any sustained further long-term fall in the market. The logic is nonetheless irresistible: the gap between Japanese and American valuations must progressively close.

Amstrad remains a one-man band

Amstrad always was a one-man band, and so long as Alan Sugar, chairman, is on this earth, always will be one. Yesterday's adverse stock market reaction to the abrupt departure of the chief executive, David Rogers, was therefore a curious one. If you invest in Amstrad, you are investing in Alan Sugar, not his lieutenant.

Nonetheless, the City plainly believed things might have changed. Three years of careful bridge-building with the City following Mr Sugar's ill-starred attempt to take the computers to telecommunications group private in 1992 have been undone. The removal of Mr Rogers removes the key stone in this edifice. As a former senior executive of Philips, he gave credibility to Mr Sugar's attempts to turn Amstrad from an entrepreneurial freeform into a serious international electronics group.

Plainly his ideas of rebuilding the core consumer business did not accord with those of Mr Sugar, who wants further to prune the business, eliminate loss-makers

and cut costs to match reduced sales. Mr Sugar's instincts may be correct. After all, it was his gut feelings for what the consumer wanted which made Amstrad the remarkable success story it was in the mid-1980s. Now he wants to take Amstrad off in new directions, stripping out the old activities and concentrating on new businesses such as the Dancall mobile telephone maker and Viglen, a maker of computers that sells direct to its customers.

While Amstrad works out its management problems, shareholders can rest reasonably assured the company's £140m of cash and ownership of strongly-performing Viglen provide a floor of around 170p under the share price. Don't expect a business run on conventional lines, however. This is one of those stocks where the man is bigger than the company.

Supermarkets alight on electricity

When Marks & Spencer went into financial services, the banking and insurance world trembled at the thought of its potential market power. In the event, it did not turn out that way and the financial giants are fighting each other rather than the retailers. Chain stores and supermarkets can nonetheless still cause serious disruption when they enter new markets, as Tesco and others are demonstrating in petrol retailing.

The latest industry to come within their sights is electricity supply.

In theory, any reputable company will be able to buy power from the electricity trading pool from 1998 and sell it to domestic customers through their existing meters. The regional electricity company distribution networks will become common carriers, open to any licensed supplier to use.

The mechanics of the move towards open competition are the responsibility of the electricity industry. Since no businessman in his right mind will go out of his way to encourage competition, it has been dragging its feet. Last summer it was criticised in a report by the Commons trade and industry committee for poor preparation for 1998. Professor Stephen Littlechild, the regulator has given the industry a kick and brought in consultants to steer the plans through. Initial responses are not encouraging.

There is to be a centralised clearing system to handle the billing of electricity supplied from the trading pool to the various competing companies, but this has already provoked a row. Some regional electricity companies believe the £30m cost estimate is double what is required and are drawing up alternative plans. Since wholesale power prices vary through the day, this would be a complex project to get right at the best of times. But in this case there is a conflict of interest. The smoother the new arrangements work, the more quickly existing suppliers lose out to newcomers. Mmmm.

Barings tops league with £20bn deals

JOHN WILLCOCK
Financial Correspondent

Barings Brothers has topped the UK mergers and acquisitions league table for 1995 with deals totalling nearly £20bn, despite its February derivatives disaster and subsequent rescue by the Dutch bank ING.

The corporate finance arm of ING Barings, Barings Brothers, handled 26 public and private deals worth £19.48bn according to the *Acquisitions Monthly* magazine.

By far the biggest part of this came from one mega-deal, when Barings advised Wellcome, working with Morgan Stanley, early this year in its £9.1bn takeover by Glaxo. The bank also had a hand in the second-biggest, Lloyds Bank's £5.9bn takeover of TSB Group,

in which it advised Lloyds. The year was also notable for seeing last year's champion, Warburg, falling to third place. Warburg first tried to merge with Morgan Stanley, failed, and was then in effect swallowed by rival Swiss Banking Corporation to become SBC Warburg.

Four American banks benefited from the problems besetting several of their UK competitors and made big gains in the table. JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley sprang from outside the top 20 to fifth and seventh place, respectively.

Mark Burch, a director of corporate finance at Barings, said the result was "very good news. It's been a very busy and a very good year."

Mr Burch said that the weeks following the discovery of over £800m in derivatives trading

UK Mergers & Acquisitions

League table 1995		
Adviser	Number of deals	Total value (£m)
Barings Brothers (4)	26	19,477
Lazard Brothers (9)	30	14,683
SBC Warburg (1)	48	13,821
NM Rothschild (11)	42	12,067
JP Morgan (2)	7	11,940
Schroders (-)	30	11,931
Morgan Stanley (-)	9	11,083
Deutsche Morgan Grenfell (6)	46	8,348
Kleinwort Benson (7)	25	8,192
Goldman Sachs (3)	13	6,835

Source: *Acquisitions Monthly*

losses in Singapore in February had been "a very tough period". Many corporate clients had thought about their relationship with Barings, he said. "ING moved very quickly. They them-

selves have grown through mergers, and they had no prescribed formula for change. We also had a high level of cohesion in the group.

"There were no departures.

We agreed to stick together, and this year has proved that [was the right thing to do]."

Such was the wealth of M&A activity in 1995 that Barings had to hire extra people. The UK corporate finance team grew by 7 to 67, including 17 directors and 40 executives.

Such a boom year has fuelled talk of bumper bonuses. Mr Burch said that "clearly it has been a very good year and so compensation is likely to reflect that". Barings' bonuses are decided in February and paid in March, he said.

Utility bids have helped to boost figures for the year generally. Barings advised on one of the few hostile utilities bids so far. Along with Deutsche Morgan Grenfell it acted for Scottish Power in its £1.1bn takeover of Manweb, the re-

gional electricity company based in Chester.

There were 14 public bids over £1bn announced during 1995, compared with only one in 1994. This also beats the 1989 record when there were 11 such deals. The number of public bids completed in 1995 rose to 84, worth a combined £36.47bn, compared with 62 in 1994 totalling £5.09bn.

Second is Lazard Brothers with 30 deals totalling nearly £15bn. As well as advising Glaxo, the bank is working on two large pending deals – advising Granada in its £3.1bn bid for Forte as well as National & Provincial in its proposed £1.3bn takeover by Abbey National.

Analysts expect 1996 will be another good year, possibly as good as 1995.

Thomson and Cook strike 11th-hour deal

RUSSELL HOTTEN

A big dispute between two of the best known names in the travel industry, Thomson and Thomas Cook, has been settled in time for the traditional new year boom in holiday sales.

Thomson, the tour operator, and Thomas Cook, the travel agency, had stopped doing business with each other three weeks ago in a row over commissions and discounts.

Thomson was thought to have demanded that Thomas Cook accept lower commission rates on its holidays of about 10 per cent, but be allowed to offer higher discounts to customers of around 12 per cent.

Thomas Cook said it could not cover its costs under such an arrangement, and the dispute was threatening to spill over into the courts.

Thomson disconnected Thomas Cook from its holiday booking system, while the travel agent removed the tour operator's brochures from its network of 385 shops.

Neither side was yesterday revealing the terms of the settlement. But it is believed that Thomson has agreed to pay higher commissions while Thomas Cook will discount holidays by only 10 per cent.

Brochures for next year's holiday were being rushed to Thomas Cook shops yesterday.

The days over Christmas and New Year are the busiest of the year for holiday bookings, and no travel company can afford to miss such a lucrative period of business.

The deal, agreed late on Tuesday after both sides' lawyers worked over Christmas, provides enough flexibility for Thomson to offer bigger discounts if the key selling season does not go well.

A Thomas Cook spokeswoman said: "We are now selling Thomson holidays. We have reached an agreement that is mutually acceptable."

At Thomson, which sells one in three of the 10 million overseas package holidays bought in Britain, a spokeswoman confirmed an agreement had been reached but declined to comment further.

The dispute threatened to financially hurt Thomas Cook, which has a 13 per cent share of the overseas holiday tours sold in the UK. At least one in 10 of Thomas Cook's customers books a Thomson holiday.

The industry has been hit hard this year due to its own over-optimistic forecasts about how many people would holiday abroad this summer.

Last week Thomas Cook announced discounts of up to 15 per cent on package tours a day after Lunn Poly revealed a pay-by-installment plan.

Wave of strikes heralds more French gloom

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

The recent wave of strikes and unrest has taken business confidence in France to its lowest for nearly two years.

The balance of firms reporting increased output compared with those saying production was down fell to minus 9 per cent in December, down from minus 6 per cent the previous month. It was the lowest balance since January 1994, according to an official survey published yesterday.

The survey showed that levels of finished stocks rose for the fourth month in a row, reflecting the economy's slowdown.

The national statistics office, Insee, reported that optimism about future output had plunged even more dramatically. The balance expecting to raise rather than reduce pro-

duction dived from minus 21 to minus 36 per cent. The gloomiest sectors were the car and transport industries and manufacturers of semi-finished goods, although food and consumer goods manufacturers have also become more pessimistic.

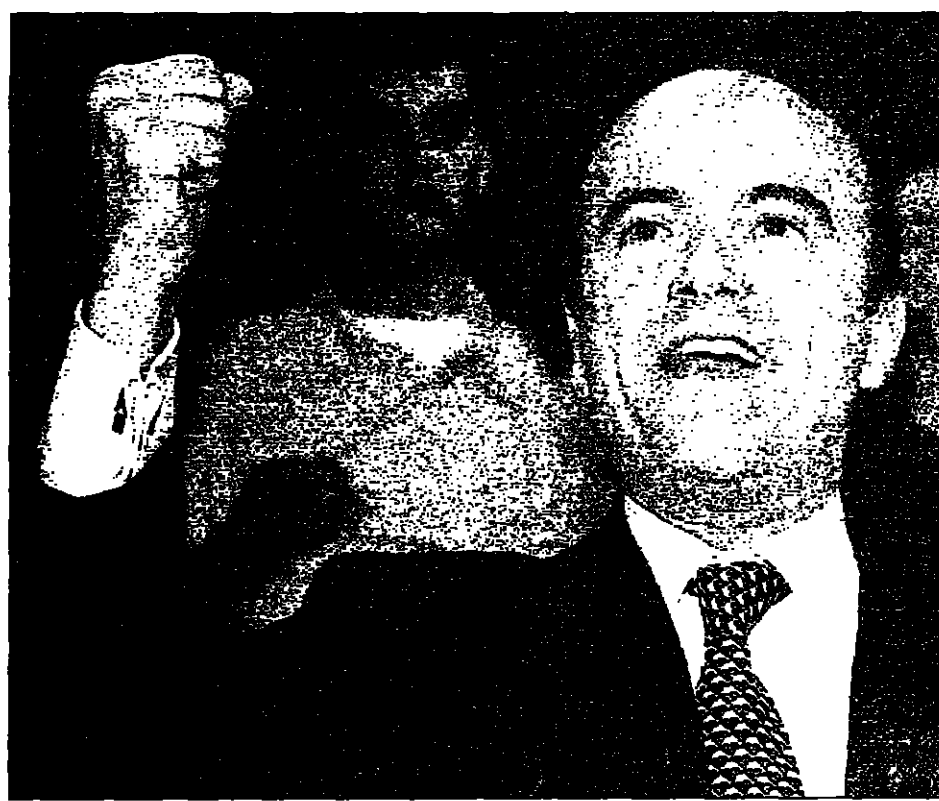
Hans Tietmeyer, the Bundesbank President, yesterday tried to put an optimistic gloss on the outlook for the French economy by saying that he thought it would meet the conditions for taking part in European monetary union from its start in 1999.

Mr Tietmeyer said he could not envisage a monetary union without France. It was one of the "core countries of European integration," he told a German newspaper. The Bundesbank President said France had the "will and ability" to meet the conditions set out by the Maas-

tricht Treaty. However, recent figures make Prime Minister Alain Juppé's chances of reducing the government deficit to below 3 per cent of GDP look slim. Growth is slowing sharply, while deficit-cutting plans are under threat after the wave of strikes.

The latest French industrial production figures showed a 1.9 per cent fall in October, following an almost equally sharp drop the previous month. Year-on-year output growth turned negative for the first time since the end of 1993.

Despite the depressing survey results, there was a slight recovery in share prices in Paris after a technical disruption in the morning. The stockmarket was reacting to Wednesday's announcement by the French Government of new details of measures intended to stimulate consumer spending.



Prime Minister Juppé: slim chance of meeting Maastricht targets

Photograph: AP

Virgin TV promises court drama

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Virgin TV promises fireworks at the High Court next month, when the controversial Channel 5 licence award is to be put to judicial review.

According to a Virgin TV insider, "you will be very surprised by what you learn" at the three-day hearing, scheduled to begin on 17 January.

Virgin TV declined to comment officially on its case. But speculation centres on correspondence between the Independent Television Commission and Channel 5 Broadcasting, which could show whether the ITC allowed the winning bidder

to raise by £100m the amount it had set aside to cover the costs of launching the channel.

Virgin TV, whose application was rejected on the grounds of quality, won the right to seek judicial review last month, claiming there had been procedural unfairness. The High Court ruled that the consortium had an arguable case.

Specifically, Virgin TV, made up of Richard Branson's Virgin Group and Paramount Television, said that Channel 5 Broadcasting had been given an opportunity to alter its bid after the 2 May deadline. Other bidders, Virgin TV claimed, were not provided an opportunity to make changes.

Channel 5 Broadcasting, backed by Pearson, M&L, CLT, the Luxembourg-based broadcaster, and Warburg Pincus, has said it merely clarified the amount set aside to cover the worst-case scenario of £300m.

To date, most industry observers have assumed that Virgin TV would fall in its bid to overturn the award. The ITC has never lost a judicial review.

However, any suggestion of procedural unfairness could lead to a reconsideration of the licence award. Of the possible scenarios in the event of a court judgment in Virgin TV's favour, a re-bid is believed to be most likely.

Four bidders applied for the

licence last Spring. UKTV, backed by Canadian broadcaster CanWest and SelectTV, the independent television producer, bid £30m, the highest, but was disqualified on quality grounds. Its attempt earlier this month to win the right to judicial review failed, although it was given leave to submit information during the Virgin TV court case next month.

Virgin TV and Channel 5 Broadcasting controversially bid an identical £22,000,000, while low-bidder New Century, back by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, Granada and others, offered £2m. New Century's petition for judicial review, filed two weeks ago, was also rejected.

Airbus shares \$3bn Philippine order

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Airbus, the four-nation aircraft consortium that includes British Aerospace, has won the lion's share of a \$3bn (£2bn) order from Philippine Airlines.

The order for 32 aircraft is shared with Boeing, which last month secured a \$12m contract from Singapore Airlines.

The Philippine order goes some way to ease the deep disappointment of losing the Singapore business and comes at the end of a difficult year in which Airbus lost several im-

portant tenders. Boeing is currently favourite to win the bulk of a huge order to be announced soon from Malaysian Airlines.

Philippine Airlines is buying eight Boeing 747-400s, and 24 aircraft from Airbus: four A340 four-engine long-range types, eight twin-engine A330s and 12 of the A320 mid-range aircraft.

An A340 is worth about \$120m, an A330 some \$110m, and the A320 about \$50m. A Boeing 747-400 sells for about \$150m.

Civil aviation is emerging from recession, with the Far

East market growing fastest, but large orders are scarce and closely fought. Yesterday's announcement was a blow to America's McDonnell Douglas, which desperately needs orders for its MD-80 aircraft.

The Philippine order is for delivery over the next three years, and will provide much-needed work for the Airbus consortium, which is made up of France's Aerospatiale, Germany's Daimler-Benz Aerospace, CASA of Spain and British Aerospace. Aerospatiale and Daimler-Benz own 38

per cent each, BAE has 20 per cent and CASA four per cent.

Airbus and Boeing are fighting it out for an order from Malaysian Airlines, which is expected to make an announcement on a 10bn ringgit (£2.5bn) purchase in early January.

Newspapers in Malaysia have reported that Boeing will clinch more than half the order for 25 new long- and medium-range aircraft, with Airbus the remainder. McDonnell Douglas was said to be out of the running.

INDEPENDENT Special Reports Diary 1996

FAX-U-BACK
0336 416 295

For a list of forthcoming Independent Special Reports, please fax the number above and press "start" when connected. Your fax machine will then print out our diary.

Calls are charged at 39p per minute cheap rate, and 49p per minute at all other times.

business

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Gilts market slightly tarnished

The gilts market is rounding off this year full of good cheer about prospects for 1996. Returns on gilts have not been as high as those in major overseas government bond markets during the past 12 months. But the recent sharp advance in the UK market shows that investors are confident falling interest rates and low inflation will deliver a rewarding performance next year.

That confidence now looks overdone and a disappointment seems inevitable. All the good news about 1996 has been priced into gilts in the past two months. With hindsight, it would have been better to invest at the end of October.

It is true that there remains plenty of good news about the inflation outlook remains the best for a generation. Economic growth has slowed to a sustainable pace and the risks are that it will slow even further. Further cuts in base rates are on the cards. The economic environment is just as good abroad, so prospects are favourable for the main overseas bond markets which gilts tend to follow.

However, the market's focus on the good news may be deflecting it from the risks from inflation. One danger comes from increasing pay settlements. Another is that retailers will try to rebuild profit margins if consumer spending picks up as the Chancellor predicted in his Budget a month ago.

There are one or two other potential stumbling blocks. Changes to the structure of the gilts market, starting with the introduction of open gilts next week, will help the market in the long run but could cause some choppy trading in the short run. If government borrowing continues to be higher than expected, the extra supply of paper will become a concern. The Bank of England's auction announcement yesterday confirmed that it already has to sell nearly £14bn-worth of stock in the next quarter.

All this is before raising the question of political risk. The stretch before a general election is not usually a peaceful time for gilts investors.

Institutions can opt to switch into more appealing overseas markets. For private investors, there are two attractive strategies. The first is to concentrate on short-dated gilts. Yields of 6.2 to 6.7 per cent for maturities of up to five years are very attractive relative to alternative investments, and there seems to be no danger of Mr Clarke pushing base rates up before the election, even if they might not fall as much as some people hope.

The second option is to go for index-linked stocks, which have outperformed other gilts this year. They will deliver an inflation-protected return and are a good way of hedging against any pessimism on the inflation outlook.

Bonds offer a punt for nervous

Guaranteed income bonds have been under a cloud for most of this year, waiting for the taxman to decide exactly how the underlying investments that back the guarantee will be treated from next April.

Scottish Widows, which raised £300m in February after guaranteeing a net annual return of 7.4 per cent on a five-year bond, has promised to make good any shortfall caused by the changed tax regime. That makes the Widows offer even better value, given that more recent issues by suppliers such as GAN Life or AIG Life offer lower returns, anyway.

Guaranteed stock market bonds, which emphasise capital rather than income, have tended to take up the run-

ning. TSB, now Lloyds TSB, one of the big players in the market, has just introduced its 20th issue.

The capital is guaranteed even if the FTSE 100 index falls over the next five years; there is no limit on the upside potential; and if the index shows a 25 per cent gain at any time it is locked in to provide a minimum gain.

The increase is calculated on only 95 per cent of the initial investment however, so a 50 per cent rise in the index will generate a return of just 47.5 per cent.

The bond is structured as a single-premium life policy and all growth is normally paid free of tax to standard rate taxpayers, although higher rate payers will be liable for a 15 per cent surcharge. The minimum investment is £2,000.

Another current offer, Hamilton Life's Guaranteed Growth Bond will open next week. In this case a minimum investment of £5,000 guarantees a return of 50 per cent on top of the initial capital after six years. The index must then more than double before investors receive any further increase and even then it is capped at half of any additional rise.

Nervous savers will be drawn by the

guarantees from these bonds, which offer a little more spice than Tesas, but true investors will stick to putting on the stock market, which has been a steady outperformer in most recent years.

A quiet start for Lloyds TSB

Trading in Lloyds TSB, the new merged banking group, got off to a sound, if unspectacular start yesterday. The shares added 4.5p to 343.5p, but the market may not be doing full justice to the potential benefits of Lloyds' double marriage this year.

There is no question Sir Brian Pitman, the Lloyds chief executive, has set himself a formidable task. Integrating Cheltenham & Gloucester, the former building society was always going to be difficult, but it will be nothing compared to TSB. The bank duplicates Lloyds in nearly everything it does, while its culture could hardly be more different, having been based in the traditions of the savings bank movement.

But the new grouping starts off as one of the top three players in several key areas, including the mortgage, retail banking and corporate lending markets. Its lending will give it a market share of 12 per cent and its branch network 18 per cent of the total for banks and building societies.

There are two weapons Mr Pitman can use to level off this base. The focus so far has been on cost-cutting. Lloyds has forecast that savings will hit £350m a year by the end of the century. However, that estimate is almost certain to be conservative based on US bank mergers. SBC Warburg suggests another £100m could be found, particularly if Parliament passes the required private member's bill in 1997.

Equally important to the Lloyds' mergers will be successful brand management. The new group will have a powerful array of brands at its disposal. C&G commands an excellent name in mortgages, while TSB is building a reputation for value-for-money, no frills banking products and Lloyds retains its attractions for a wealthier, more professional customer base.

Based on SBC Warburg's forecast of profits of £2.36bn in 1996, the shares stand on a forward multiple of 12. That suggests Lloyds TSB should remain a core holding in any portfolio.

Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

Now Barings tries its hand in South Korea

With past presidents accused of all manner of foul deeds in the run up to elections – not too mention allegations of corruption levelled at Hyundai and Daewoo (two of the country's most successful companies) – the average Korean is not exactly starved of after-dinner conversation. Now the Korean Stock Exchange has whipped up more excitement by adding the Barings name to the list of its in-house residents.

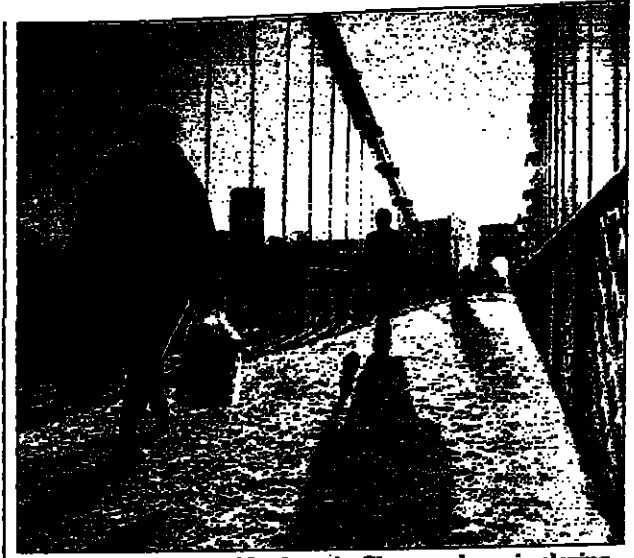
Already a legend in the Pacific Rim thanks to its reputation in derivatives trading, the blue-blooded Dutch institution is expected to take its seat on the Seoul Exchange on 29 January – a privilege which does not come cheap.

The exchange yesterday approved applications by ING Barings and Hambro-Salomon Securities, a joint venture between Salomon Brothers and several Korean companies, bringing the number of foreign and joint venture securities houses with seats on the exchange to four. The new boys join Dongbang-Peregrine (yes, I'm afraid so) and Jardine Fleming. The two new houses will have to pay about £12m in subscription fees and various deposits before they are allowed to join.

Still, petty cash compared to the final bill in Singapore. And an opportunity perhaps for Nick Leeson when he finally earns parole.

A cautionary tale from the current edition of *Whitbread News*, which highlights the perils of offering customer guarantees. Staff at the brewer's Thresher chain of wine shops are reporting some ingenious wheezes to take advantage of its Wine Buyer's Guarantee, which offers a replacement bottle if the first choice disappoints.

One elderly customer returned her purchase in a specimen jar, claiming that she was disappointed with



The Arctic snap in the North, as in Glasgow above, is playing merry hell with the lines of communication between Britain's financial nerve-centres. Here is a conversation between the London and Glasgow offices of Barclays Stockbrokers.

Richard Durlacher, deputy chairman: "How is it going up there?"

Glasgow office: "Minus 19."

Durlacher: "That's odd, the Footsie is up 11 down here."

the contents but was unable to return them in the original container. Another customer returned an almost full bottle of sparkling wine which turned out to be water with a dash of washing up liquid. Both were reimbursed.

Indispensable research from the nation's independent financial advisers, who report that 12 million Britons will start 1996 by making a new year's resolution. Sadly for IFA Promotion, the advisers' marketing arm, there is little evidence that any of them will resolve to use an independent financial adviser – even though it is offering a free half hour on the couch for anyone who wants to sort out their financial affairs.

According to those surveyed the most popular financial resolution will be to spend less in 1996. Some 33 per cent, including "a gladiator called Wolf" said that they will try and spend less

than they earn. A further 10 per cent said that they will try and pay off their credit card bills with 8 per cent promising to sort out a pension.

And a prosperous new year to all our retailers.

Encouraging news for carpenters The New Zealand company Fletcher Challenge announces it has finally discovered "The Supertree" – the result of a world-wide search for a tree species and a growing location that will provide a superior lumber. The quest to identify this faster-growing tree (which needed to be able to flourish in places with stable, low-cost economies) has been an urgent one. Tragically for the Kiwis this triumph of economical Darwinism is not located in New Zealand.

No, the winner is... Eucalyptus Grandis, grown in northern Argentina.

The Government is facing an uphill slog in its campaign to rekindle public enthusiasm for state sell-offs, writes Peter Rodgers

Changing the unacceptable face of privatisation

Modest returns for many investors

After the worst press for privatisation in at least a decade, government ministers are quietly encouraging the former state companies to fight back. The utilities are planning to step up campaigns in the coming months to persuade their millions of customers that privatisation was not just for the benefit of shareholders and fat-cat directors. The public is likely to be bombarded with claims of improved service and lower prices.

Ministers also plan to give fewer speeches about popular capitalism, wider share-ownership and the theoretical efficiency gains from privatisation, which, as often as not, come down to job losses. Instead, they will focus on the basic issues of prices and services, because these are what directly affect most voters.

Treasury and Department of Trade and Industry ministers are, for example, determined to wring every ounce of goodwill out of the £90 cut in electricity bills due this year – made up of a £50 rebate from the sale of the National Grid, £20 from a cut in the nuclear levy and £20 from price cuts ordered by the electricity regulator.

They are putting just as much political capital into a pilot scheme to introduce competition in domestic gas supply in Devon and Cornwall, which



Next in line: The impending privatisation of parts of the nuclear power industry and Railtrack are proving to be the most unpopular of all

they hope will prove that gas prices can be cut by at least 15 per cent nationally over the next three years.

In electricity and gas, the priority is to convince customers that the gains more than offset the imposition of VAT on fuel. But getting the message across to the population at large will

be an uphill struggle to a tight timetable. Ministers are uncomfortably aware that, well before the election, they must convince voters that privatisation is not a dirty word.

That means getting the good news across over the next few months – a tall order, given that it means erasing the memory of a year that has seen £14bn worth of unseemly bid fever in electricity.

Distribution companies have been changing hands at four times the valuations put on them at the time of privatisation in December 1990.

There was also the pillorying

of gas, electricity and water company executives for creaming off huge pay increases, the row over the flotation of the National Grid and the embarrassment of leaky Yorkshire Water, which could still be facing a supply crisis well into next year, after years of under-investment in new pipes.

Meanwhile the whole system of regulation has come under fire, initially because of a lenient price review in 1994 by Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, most recently because of the free flights taken by Peter Davis, regulator of the privatised lottery.

The usual advice to people who have got themselves into a hole is to stop digging. But the Government, far from letting the dust settle on the rows that have occupied most of 1995, has decided to keep privatisation at the forefront of the political agenda in 1996.

It is insisting on proceeding next summer with the £2.5bn sale of British Energy, the nuclear power company, and the £1.5bn sale of Railtrack, probably the two most unpopular privatisations of all, at least since the sale of the Post Office was dropped.

Some Tories describe this as

a highly principled strategy, with the Government sticking to its beliefs regardless of the unpopularity of the plans.

"We should be given credit for bravery in recognising that maybe there are better ways of doing things," said one. But those with marginal seats are probably wondering whether the tax cuts the sales will bring are worth the pain.

Government ministers do not deny that the strategy could backfire. One said: "I accept that it may be high risk," and agreed that the railway sale could get in the way of promoting the benefits of 15 years

of privatisation. But he added: "There are signs the quality of service in the utilities and in the railways is already improving in a way the public can see."

Next year's nuclear sale will have the advantage that it has already drawn the teeth of Greenpeace and other environmental groups, who are happy that the planned transfer to the private sector seems to have killed off any hope of investment in new nuclear power stations.

But where the railways are concerned, if anything goes wrong with customer service, prices or safety during the immensely complex sale, the Government rather than the new owners is bound to be blamed.

The Department of Transport and the Treasury claim to be pleasantly surprised by the quality of the rail sales achieved so far – the first three franchises, which will be up and running during the spring, the £1.8bn rolling stock leasing companies and a variety of engineering support services.

Ministers also believe the tide of popular dislike of rail privatisation could begin to turn now that the first franchisees such as Stagecoach, the bus operator, are out in the open and can promote their plans. But there is a long way to go, with 22 franchises still unsold and Railtrack not due to be floated until late spring.

Nevertheless, the Government seems to believe it can win the political argument if the privatisations of telecommunications, gas, water and electricity are judged next year on what they deliver for consumers, rather than for shareholders.

Enormous profits have been made on privatisation stocks over the years. But British Gas, the company that made fat cats famous, actually showed a negative return to shareholders of 13 per cent over the last year as concern grew about rising competition and falling prices.

The total return to gas shareholders since privatisation, including reinvested dividends, is also modest compared with gains made in a much shorter period by electricity and water company shareholders.

Another privatisation investment to show a negative return last year was BT, largely because of City concern at increasingly tough regulation.

Although all the other privatisation stocks showed positive total returns last year, many fell below the average 24 per cent gain made by investors in FTSE 100 stocks during 1995.

Outside the water and electricity industry, only BP and British Airways beat the average gain and Cable & Wireless matched it. Poor performers in relative terms include Ameri-Sham International, BAA, En-terprise Oil and Rolls-Royce. Where companies were sold in more than one go, gains are shown from the earliest date.

Several water companies out-paced the market's hundred biggest companies shown in the table are adjusted to include special dividends and capital changes such as share buy-backs, and to allow for the the demerger and flotation of National Grid earlier this month.

Some companies have already been taken over and are about to lose their Stock Exchange quotations.

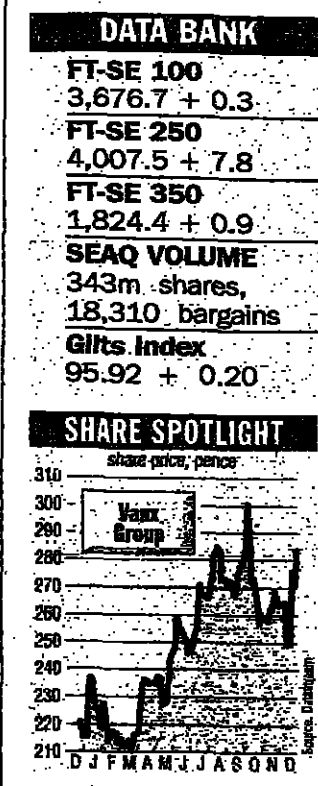
THE OMEGA IS ENGINEERED BEYOND ITS CLASS.

WHAT CAN

THE OMEGA FROM VAUXHALL

Total returns to shareholders from privatisations											
Miscellaneous				Water				Electricity			
Company	% increase		Sale date	Company	% increase		Sale date	Company	% increase		Sale date
	1995	from sale			1995	from sale			1995	from sale	
Amersham Int'l	4	798	24 Feb 82	Anglian	26	270	11 Dec 89	PowerGen	4	277	11 Mar 91
Ass B Ports	6	2910	14 Feb 83	N West	19	272	11 Dec 89	Nat'l Power	4	222	11 Mar 91
BAA	6	423	27 Nov 87	Northumbrian	64	591	11 Dec 89	N I Electric	26	118	18 Jun 93
BP*	31	1225	12 Nov 79	S West	10	236	11 Dec 89	Scotts Hydro	14	78	17 Jun 91
B Airways	37	517	10 Feb 87	Sewer Trent	34	313	11 Dec 89	Scotts Power	10	83	17 Jun 91
B Gas	-13	231	5 Dec 86	Southern	25	313	11 Dec 89	E Midlands	4	361	10 Dec 90
B Steel	9	92	2 Dec 88	Thames	22	239	11 Dec 89	Eastern	32	428	10 Dec 90
B Telecom	-4	363	30 Nov 84	Welsh	19	355	11 Dec 89	London	21	373	10 Dec 90
C & Wireless	24	2235	4 Nov 81	Wessex	20	298	11 Dec 89	Manweb	23	447	10 Dec 90
Enterprise Oil	7	294	29 Jun 84					Midlands	18	390	10 Dec 90
Rolls-Royce	8	71	14 May 87					Northern	12	481	10 Dec 90
*from date of first Thatcher government sale											
Assumes dividends reinvested. Return for 1995 is for the year to 22 Dec											
Source: Datastream											
								Seaboard	34	570	10 Dec 90
								Southern	19	362	10 Dec 90
								Yorks	4	349	10 Dec 90

market report/shares



Talk of stake-building puts wind in Trafalgar's sails

Trafalgar House, the battered and bruised conglomerate created by Sir Nigel Brookes and the late Lord Matthews, was one of the best-performing shares as stake-building rumours captured the imagination of a lifeless stock market.

The shares climbed 3p to 27p in what, by the standards of the day, was brisk trading with Seaq putting turnover at nearly 7.5 million.

Hong Kong Land, part of the Kowloon family's sprawling Jardine Matheson Far Eastern empire, was said to be responsible for the share performance. It already has a 26 per cent shareholding, on which it is suffering an embarrassing loss, and was rumoured, as a display of support for the struggling conglomerate, to have instructed its stockbrokers to lift its stake to 29.9 per cent, the highest it can achieve without triggering an obligation to

bid. There was little evidence of any HKL buying pressure: if, indeed, it is interested in buying more shares it could have been deterred by the sudden price increase.

Johnson Matthey was also dragged into the story on some vague, alleged tax advantages it could claim from a link with Trafalgar.

The engineering and building group, which also embraces the Cunard liner fleet, has had a torrid time as profits have disappeared under the weight of draining, long-term contracts.

Earlier this month it produced a much bigger-than-expected £31m loss and said dividends would not be paid until "sustainable profits" were achieved.

The loss, which included a barrow-load of provisions, compared with a profit of £46.6m last time and £151.5m in the halcyon days of 1990



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

with the shares were more than 200p; they hit a 326.5p peak before the crash of 1987. Trafalgar, which recently sold the Ritz Hotel in London for £75m is still haemorrhaging cash and there is a feeling it will soon be forced to sell Cunard, which takes in the QETI.

The Americans destroyed what had appeared to be a determined drive towards a new FT-SE peak.

With the Dow Jones Average looking decidedly hesitant in early trading, Footsie finished just 0.3 points higher after earlier nudging its record trading level with an 11.5 gain to 3,687.9. Once again turnover was pathetically thin

with many of the trades merely tax-efficient bed-and-breakfast exercises. Vaux, the Sunderland-based brewer and hotelier, enjoyed a modest ferment, up 14p at 284p, as stories surfaced of a Bass bid.

Bass seems to be the current bidder for all seasons. It has been rumoured to be interested in Ladbroke, the betting and hotel group, and is one of the parties seeking to buy Carlsberg-Tetley. Britain's third-largest brewer, owned by Allied Domecq and Carlsberg of Denmark.

The brewing giant is unlikely to want Vaux's breweries, pubs or nursing homes. But it could

fancy the Sunderland group's chain of Swallow Hotels which must be benefiting from the industry upturn.

Vaux's recent flat profits and the decision of finance director Timothy Walker to move to another job, have left it looking exposed. There is also talk that one of its big regional rivals - the Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries - could be interested.

Trading started in the new banking group. Lloyds TSB was up 4.5p to 343.5p despite the special 68.3p dividend to former TSB shareholders. It was quick to deny market speculation it planned to find a buyer for its newly acquired Hull Samuel merchant banking side.

Takeover talk was back to haunt Royal Bank of Scotland, up 8p at 588p. Schroders, 38p higher at 1,348p, was helped by its bids and deals record over the past year.

Dixons, which replaced TSB in the FT-SE index, lost a little of Wednesday's enthusiasm, falling 3p to 446p.

Amstrad, the computer group run by Alan Sugar, was the day's big casualty.

The sudden departure of chief executive David Rogers sent the shares crashing 38p to 191.5p.

Louche, where there is persistent speculation of break-up moves, slipped 3p to 176p. Oils weakened after their recent strong run, dragged down by lacklustre displays by US oil stocks. Enterprise fell 6p to 398p.

Stagecoach, the bus group, continued to advance, up 1p to 352p, with stories that it could bid for the Docklands Light Railway doing the rounds.

The seemingly brighter housing outlook inspired estate agent Hambro Countrywide 3p higher to 43p.

TAKING STOCK

□ Bardon, the aggregates group, is attracting discreet interest. The shares have been keenly traded in the past week with turnover yesterday topping 3 million, according to Seaq. The price firmed modestly to 32p. Last month the group cut gearing to 50 per cent by selling its dredging business to Huisson for £72m. The company is seen as an interesting recovery play with profits of £24m expected this year against £19.5m. There is also talk of bid action.

□ TBL, the property group that owns Cardiff Airport, is likely to emerge as a determined player if, as expected, the smaller property companies consolidate. It has taken over Molyneux and raised £30m through a rights issue which achieved a 95.7 per cent take-up. The shares are 53p.

BANKS		MERCHANT					
Share	Price	Change	Yld	P/E	Code		
525	418	Castle Allen	426	+0.2	8.8	7.0	3261
3407	216.5	Citibank	348	-	3.4	14.1	2189
440	385	Commerzbank	412	-	6.4	14.3	2685
253	185	Deutsche Bank	210	-	4.7	-	2972
145	75	HSBC	100	-	5.2	25.0	3080
142	80	Ind. & Nat. Bank	130	+0.1	11.0	3.0	3081
67	44	Bank of Ireland	55	-	1.9	28.0	3785
178	502.5	Schroders	548	+0.1	13.3	19.2	3989
111	81	Singer & Friedl	109	-	4.2	11.3	4023
70	100	Union	87	-	4.3	-	4253
226	270	Bank of West	270	-	-	-	4253

RUGBY LEAGUE: A scrum-half is back at the top after a miserable experience 'down under'

Ford fired up for local challenge

For Mike Ford, tomorrow's Regal Trophy semi-final against St Helens represents everything that he missed about the English game during his ill-fated exile in Australia.

Ford was one of the two top scrum-halves in Britain when he forsook Castleford for Queensland 18 months ago. His hopes for a new career in the Winfield Cup were high and it seemed that England had seen the last of him.

Now he is back, wearing the No 7 shirt for Warrington and eagerly looking forward to the first big game since his return. "I'm just glad to be involved in a game like this. This sort of local rivalry is what I missed in Australia," he says.

Ford's stint with the newly-formed South Queensland Crushers started solidly enough, with the English import holding down a first-grade spot. "But then our coach, Bob Lindner, dropped a bombshell by telling me that he had never rated me and wouldn't be picking me if he had any choice in the matter."

Ford had been attracted to the Crushers by his former Castleford coach, Danny Van de Velde, who quite clearly did rate him. But, with Lindner calling the shots and Van de Velde on his way out, there was little future there for him. "It was a shame, because we had just got settled there and the family loved it in Australia."

But Ford needed a lifeline to rescue his playing career - and it came from Warrington, who saw his guile and experi-

Dave Hadfield reports on a key figure in tomorrow's Regal Trophy semi-final

ence as the ideal ingredient to blend with the youthful, instinctive talent of Iestyn Harris at stand-off. "I'm relishing it," says Ford of the new combination. "I think we are going to complement each other pretty well."

"Iestyn is a running No 6. Such is his enthusiasm for the game that he wants the ball all the time and he gives me a wealth of options. I've only known Tony Kemp at Castleford and Brett Kenny, during our one season together at Wigan, who have been anything like him."

Mention of Kenny tends to date Ford, who partnered him throughout the 1984/85 season that marked the start of Wigan's renaissance. It says everything about his early promise, as well, that the young scrum-half never looked out of place alongside one of the game's great stylists.

After that dazzling early phase - including victory at Wembley in the best-ever Challenge Cup final - his career became a fluctuating affair, taking him to Leigh and Oldham before he once more began to fulfil his potential under Van de Velde at Castleford, winning his two Great Britain caps in 1993.

By one of the co-incidences that goes hand-in-hand with the village culture that he missed when he left English rugby league, tomorrow's semi-final brings him into confrontation

with a player whose career has parallels with his own.

Bobbie Goulding was also a scrum-half prodigy at Wigan and has also followed a nomadic career path since. "I'm looking forward to playing against Bobbie, so that I can measure myself and how well I'm slotting back into the game here," he says. "He was in great form during my last season at Castleford and everybody says he was even better last time around. We have certainly got to get up on him, because he is undoubtedly their key man."

Now 30 and with the benefit of all his varied experience behind him, Ford is earmarked as Warrington's key man in the first couple of Super League seasons.

For him, the revelation has been the quality of the young players the Wire have drawn in, particularly the 18-year-old Paul Sculthorpe, whom he remembers as a schoolboy who haunted every Oldham training session, rain or shine.

"When I think back to what I was like at 18, he is 10 times better," he insists. That assessment bodes well for Warrington's future. As far as the unfinished business of this transitional season is concerned - including what could be the last Regal Trophy - fresh talents like Harris and Sculthorpe will be only too glad for the steady influence of Ford.



Half-chance: Mike Ford is keen to link up with Iestyn Harris Photograph: Andrew Varley

Story remains the same for Sri Lankans

Cricket

Australia 500-6 dec
Sri Lanka 233 and 33-1

Sri Lanka enjoyed a rare day free of controversy yesterday but their fortunes on the field sank in familiar fashion in the second Test against Australia. Beaten by an innings in the first Test two weeks ago, the tourists seem to be stumbling towards a similar fate at Melbourne.

Sri Lanka, distracted for the first two days by the saga surrounding the legality of their off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan's bowling action, said yesterday they would consider leaving him out of the third Test unless questions surrounding the legitimacy of his action were resolved.

The match has followed the pattern established in Perth, where Sri Lanka's heavy defeat was overshadowed with the accusation of ball tampering by the match referee. Graham Dowling, although they were later exonerated by the International Cricket Council.

In reply to Australia's first innings of 500 for 6 declared, Sri Lanka were dismissed for 233 and forced to follow on. At close of play, they were 33 for 1, still needing to score another 234 runs to make Australia bat again.

An intimidating spell by Glenn McGrath inflicted most of the damage in Sri Lanka's first innings. McGrath, gradually assuming the mantle of Australia's main strike bowler ahead of Craig McDermott, claimed 5 for 40.

McGrath troubled the Sri Lankan batsman by generating extreme pace and bounce. Only

the wicketkeeper, Romesh Kaluwitharana, and the captain, Arjuna Ranatunga, delayed Australia's onslaught with half centuries of differing character.

While Ranatunga showed caution in compiling 51 runs from 155 balls, Kaluwitharana went on the offensive, scoring one less run off a third as many deliveries.

Paul Reiffel, who took two wickets in the first innings, condemned Sri Lanka's opener, Roshan Mahanama, to another failure in the second innings.

Mahanama edged a simple catch to Shane Warne at third slip to be dismissed for three in both knockouts.

McGrath, who has claimed 29 wickets in five Tests against Pakistan and Sri Lanka this season, admitted: "That was the fastest I have bowled all season. The wicket had everything you would look for and my confidence was high."

(Third day: Australia won toss)
AUSTRALIA - First Innings: 500 for 6 dec (S R Waugh 131 not out, D C Bruni 110, K T Ponting 71).
SRI LANKA - First Innings: (Overseas 29 for 1)
U C Hathurusingha c Harvey b Ponting 23
A P Gunaratne c Harvey b Ponting 27
P A de Silva c P M de Silva b McGrath 18
R Mahanama c Taylor b Warne 14
H P Tikaram c Taylor b Warne 14
H S Kaluwitharana c Boini b McDermott 50
W P D Jayasinha c Harvey b McGrath 10
P M de Silva not out 33
M Muralitharan c Slater b McGrath 11
S R Ranatunga c Slater b McGrath 51
Extras (b, lb, nb, pen) 20
Total (88.4 overs) 233
Fall of wickets: 1-23 (2.4), 2-33 (5.1), 3-40 (6.1), 4-125 (14.6), 5-182 (21.3), 6-233 (32.1).
Bowling: McGrath 3-40 (32.1), McDermott 2-50 (25.4), Warne 2-50 (16.2), Ponting 2-50 (16.2), Reiffel 2-50 (16.2).
SRI LANKA - Second Innings: 33 for 1
R S Mahanama c Warne b Reiffel 3
U C Hathurusingha not out 20
A P Gunaratne not out 20
D C Bruni not out 11
Total (13.3 overs) 33
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (1.3).
Bowling: McGrath 4-40 (1.3), McDermott 4-40 (1.3), Warne 4-40 (1.3), Ponting 4-40 (1.3), Reiffel 4-40 (1.3).

Oats caught by the snare of statistics

Richard Edmondson on the burden of winning the Cheltenham Gold Cup

There will be those who consider the offer of 4-1 about the Cheltenham Gold Cup winner, Master Oats, to win next week's re-routed King George VI Chase as one of the value bets of the season. They are not the same people who devote the hours after twilight to digesting statistics.

In the old days it used to be that winners of the Gold Cup could mop up other prizes before reasserting their omnipotence at Cheltenham: the times when Golden Miller, Cottage Rake, Arkle and, most recently, L'Escargot were supreme. Since the last named posted his second consecutive Gold Cup victory, however, enduring success for the Blue Riband winner has been hard to find. When the field lines up on 14 March for this season's renewal it will have been 25 years since a horse either retained or regained the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

The morsels have been difficult to find as well. Between them, the last 10 winners of the Gold Cup have gone on to contest 126 races, capturing just 19 of them. The Holy Grail has become the poisoned chalice and victory at the Festival delivers not so much a laurel around the neck as a gin trap on the leg.

Toby Balding is a victim of perhaps the greatest bungee jump in rating of a Gold Cup winner. He sent out Cool Ground to take the 1992 running, after which the gelding (following outings for Balding

and a subsequent trainer, David Elsworth) went 20 efforts without glory before dropping down to an amateurs' event.

Balding believes there are many reasons for this diminution of Blue Riband winners. He even discusses sociology, which most of his brethren would think is the name of a novice chaser trained in Lambourn. "The owner hand has totally shifted in its emphasis in modern racing from the country landowner type to people from business, where everything is done pretty quickly," the trainer said. "You have to have immediate results and these days the hardest thing to do is sell a horse that has done nothing."

The chasm between those who would not let a strip of share prices pass in front of them unnoticed and others who could lazily watch the seasons go by means that jumpers these days have a harder time, both in terms of volume and severity of races. "There is no doubt the style of racing has altered and they go much quicker these days," Balding added. "That doesn't make for longer careers."

In Cool Ground's specific case, he was an unexpected winner of the race in 1992, when Adrian Maguire cajoled him in the closing stages with all the vigour of a blacksmith smiting an anvil. The horse may have recovered from his physical exertions that day, but there was little medicine for what the handicapper passed on. "Basi-

GOLD CUP WINNERS' SUBSEQUENT RECORD

Year	Winner	Subsequent record
1986	Dawn Run	After fighting back to win the most memorable Gold Cup of recent decades, she fell at the first fence at Aintree before an ambitious assault on France's Champion Hurdle. Second in a prep race, she broke her neck in a fall when challenging for the lead. No wins from three races.
1987	The Thinker	Snow could not prevent him from winning the Gold Cup but without that element he was never able to reproduce the outstanding form he showed that day. Nevertheless, he did very well to be third under top weight in a Grand National and was preparing for another assault on that race when breaking a leg at home. Two wins from 11 races.
1988	Charter Party	A martyr to his feet which were afflicted by rheumatic disease, he nevertheless managed a demanding but unsuccessful campaign of eight races, highlighted by a third in the Gold Cup, the season after his Cheltenham win. Retired after one run the next season due to a tendon injury. No wins from nine races.
1989	Desert Orchid	The charismatic grey added two more King George VI Chases and an Irish National to his tally but was not able to again overcome his aversion to Cheltenham (one win from eight attempts) and finished third in the next two Gold Cups. Seven wins from 37 races.
1990	Norton's Coin	The most astonishing of Gold Cup winners produced a few more surprises when throwing away a race at Aintree because he did not like being in front and then turning in a top-class effort next time to defeat Waterford Boy and Regatta Bay at Cheltenham. Battered rapidly upon arrival and decided to turn the game in by refusing at one of Newbury's ditches one day. One win from 17 races.
1991	Garrison Savannah	Always injury prone and took three years to win again after Cheltenham success but last season managed to score twice. By that time he had deteriorated by 35lb according to Timeform figures. Three wins from 27 races.
1992	Cool Ground	Went 20 races without winning after tough Gold Cup tussle with The Fellow until taking an injury shortly before retirement last season. One win from 22 races.
1993	Jodami	Has not dominated chasing since as his emphatic Cheltenham win indicated he would. Second in 1994 Gold Cup and tailed-off in this year's race, his jumping has been inconsistent and he has sometimes looked lost. Four wins from 22 races.
1994	The Fellow	Battered in the Grand National but won at Aintree in May 1994. Seemed to lose interest the following season and was pulled up in the King George. One win from six races.
1995	Master Oats	Seventh when favourite for the Grand National and pulled up in three-race race at Cheltenham earlier this month. No wins from two races.

cally, he was a 10-year-old when he won it and he took a 21lb hike in the handicap," Balding said. "He wasn't good enough to win another Gold Cup and not much else off that weight."

'With it being a championship you've got to be very thankful to win once never mind twice'

"The winner of the Gold Cup goes straight to the top of the handicap and if they can't go and win a conditions race then they're handicapped out of it." At 10, Cool Ground was at the top end of the modern limit. For the last 14 years, the winner has been aged either eight, nine or 10, which suggests there is a limited window of oppor-

tunity between callowness and the veteran stage. Jodami was only an eight-year-old when he won in 1993 and apparently destined for a Victorian occupancy of the throne. The gelding has as good a subsequent record of any recent Gold Cup winner, yet he too has been on a remorseless downward curve, finishing second in 1994 and eighth this year, as well as turning in two deeply unimpressive performances in the current campaign.

Peter Beaumont, nevertheless, defends Jodami's record and finds it difficult to understand why his horse should be criticised. "The Gold Cup is always the race to win and that means it's never easy," the trainer said. "With it being the championship race it's always difficult to win and Jodami has done tremendously well to win and be second. You've got to be very thankful to win once, never mind twice."

In yesterday there were five-year-old winners of the Gold Cup but that no longer occurs

as present day thinking is that chasers should still have a teat and bottle in their mouths at that age. The trade of training, like other occupations, has become far more competitive and usually enervated in the programme for a Gold Cup winner now is the lucrative Grand National, as the horse will never be so well handicapped again.

Horses, though, do not go on to win the Grand National after the Gold Cup (unless they are called Golden Miller and they were racing over 60 years ago) and they sometimes do not come back at all.

Last season's Blue Riband, in particular, was a destructive race on soft going, and even the winner looked to be labouring just after half-way. Master Oats subsequently ran without success in the Grand National and without any vigour at all on his reappearance at Cheltenham. Many will forgive him that and pledge monetary support for the King George at Sandown tomorrow week. History suggests they will be wrong.

Folkestone offers first glint of hope

A blank week for British jumping enthusiasts looks on the cards as all today's scheduled meetings at Fontwell, Newbury, Newcastle and Warwick have succumbed to frost and snow and tomorrow's cards have already started to rumble.

Tomorrow's scheduled meeting at Nottingham has already been abandoned and Catterick (inspection 8.30am) and Newbury (9.30am) both report that their tracks are frozen.

Folkestone, however, holds out a glimmer of hope. "There is a light covering of snow over most of the track, but where this has melted the frost has got into the ground," a course spokesman said. The track will be inspected at noon.

A total of 24 meetings have now been lost this week and, even if temperatures rise over the weekend, forecasters are predicting heavy snowfalls.

Wolverhampton's double programme tomorrow on Fribresand provides a rare gleam of warming news.

Prospects in Ireland are only marginally better. Leopardstown and Limerick - both abandoned yesterday - are due to race again today with prospects rated "50-50 at best" at Limerick and "60-40 against" at Leopardstown.

If Leopardstown can race tomorrow and on Sunday then the cards will include some of the best races that were lost on earlier days of the meeting.

Jumping on sand ruled out

All-weather jumping, banished in March last year after a spate of equine fatalities, will not return, the British Horseracing Board has confirmed.

With punters starved of action by the freeze, calls have come for an increase in all-weather fixtures, including some under the National Hunt code.

Paul Greeves, the BHB's racing director, said: "The prospect of its return is nil. At one stage it produced four times the normal level of fatalities, which was creating a high risk to jockeys. It would be tantamount to saying that money is more important than safety and welfare."

Elsworth vexed by replacement races

Trainers have responded positively to the efforts of the British Horseracing Board by supporting the two races added to Cheltenham's New Year's Day card to replace Kempton's Christmas Hurdle and Wetherby's Castleford Chase.

As expected, the David Nicholson-trained Viking Flagship heads the weights for the handicap chase with 11st 10lb and is one of four in the handicap proper. The remaining trio are Ireland's Strong Fulcrum, Travado and Nakir.

Henderson, who was full of praise for the BHB's initiative, warned that Travado would run only if the ground is good. "We've kept him clear of soft ground so I don't want to start now," the trainer said. "But we must take our hats off to the BHB who have tried extremely hard over this difficult period."

David Elsworth is rather less happy. He trains three of the five horses in the handicap proper in the hurdle: Atours (11st 10lb), Oh So Risky (11st 4lb) and Absalom's Lady (11st 1lb). "I have just written a letter to the racing papers about my annoyance at the situation in which we lose two Grade One races - the Bula and the Christmas Hurdle - and replace them with a £15,000 handicap. So my horses, instead of meeting their rivals on level terms, will be giving away up to a stone. But I suppose eating peanuts is better than having no food at all."

JUST THE TICKET: a weekly guide to what's on where for the sports spectator

New Year holiday period

BADMINTON: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
BASKETBALL: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
BOXING: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
CRICKET: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
FOOTBALL: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
GOLF: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
HOCKEY: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
RUGBY LEAGUE: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
RUGBY UNION: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
TENNIS: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).
WRESTLING: Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00), Friends President Grand Slam (19.00).

PICK OF THE DAY

Saturday / Cross-country
Bupa Co Durham International
Durham City

Since the County Durham International cross-country event became a round of the World Cross Challenge in 1991, it has been the men's race. It is a 10-mile race, run on a circuit of the Durham City and Durham College grounds. The race is run on a circuit of the Durham City and Durham College grounds. The race is run on a circuit of the Durham City and Durham College grounds.

exceptional circumstance rule last May after being banned for refusing to take a random drug test, may be lacking the fitness required at this level. Though 'Jagobu' is in the form that he showed at the European championships, Paul Pearson, winner of the bronze at the European championships, Paul Pearson, winner of the bronze at the European championships, Paul Pearson, winner of the bronze at the European championships.

How to get there: Palace Training Centre, Aylesfield, is a mile from Durham City. The race is run on a circuit of the Durham City and Durham College grounds. The race is run on a circuit of the Durham City and Durham College grounds.

RUGBY UNION

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

CRICKET

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

FOOTBALL

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

GOLF

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

HOCKEY

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

TENNIS

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

WRESTLING

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

BOXING

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

BADMINTON

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

BASKETBALL

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

TABLE TENNIS

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

COMPUTER

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

DIY

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

ENTERTAINMENT

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

FOOD AND DRINK

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

GARDENING

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

HEALTH AND FITNESS

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

HOME IMPROVEMENT

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

INTERESTING FACTS

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

LOCAL NEWS

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

MOVIES

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

MUSIC

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Club 10:00, Club 10:00, Club 10:00.

Compiled by Paul Maher

sport

FACES FOR '96: Three men in different sports at different stages of their career have the same problem of living up to the past

Phillips sets lips smacking

Ask a Crystal Palace supporter about the heavy weight of prediction and he will probably burst into tears. The "Team of the 1980s" was Malcolm Allison's prophesy but somehow Liverpool overshadowed them. And Everton. And Arsenal. Even their tenants, Wimbledon. Suffice to say they fell short of the mark.

Imagine, then, the cross that Martin Phillips has to bear, never mind provide. Alan Ball, his manager at Exeter and now at Manchester City, once said he would become England's first £10m player—and has the tag stuck? Is Maine Road perpetually in a state of crisis?

Just a glance in *The Pink*, Manchester's Saturday sports paper, shows it has clung like an agent to his commission. "£10m kid misses out", "£10m treasure buried" are just two examples. Phillips, Buster as he is nicknamed, has a huge expectation on his shoulders even before his debut.

In fairness to Ball, who probably wishes now he had kept quiet, he backed his judgement by buying the 19-year-old winger in November in a structured deal that will cost City less than a 10th of the manager's estimation of his future worth even if he fulfils everything. "He's one for the future," Ball purrs, almost licking his lips in anticipation. Just as Exeter fans drool from theirs about a goal Phillips scored against Fulham in September. They call it the best ever seen at St James Park and, yes, they are quite prepared to throw in that little ground of the same name up on Tyneside into the equation.

Receiving the ball with his back to goal 30 yards inside his own half, Phillips turned and beat three opponents before gliding upfield, where he bewitched two more before curling a right-foot shot into the top left-hand corner of the net. You would say it was Ryan Giggs-like, except that another tag is the last thing he needs.

"I've known Martin since he was a 13-year-old associated schoolboy," Ball said, "and even then he shone out like a beacon. In many ways he is an old-fashioned winger who can operate equally effectively on either flank. He has a lovely attitude towards his football and has immense talent."

"If there was one question mark about him, it was that he was a bit on the slight side and we might need to put him on a regime to build him up. Then, George Best wasn't muscle bound when he was 19 and he didn't do too badly."

"I don't want to put Martin

Guy Hodgson on the youngster who has swapped the countryside for Moss Side

under any pressure by labelling him a second George Best, but I want the Manchester City fans to know we have signed the most exciting young player in English soccer."

Ball's opinion might not be shared on such a grandiose scale by other clubs, but they were hovering just in case. Against Brentford this season 13 scouts turned up — they were just the ones who announced their presence — and it was this increasing interest that forced Ball to act.

"I can guess what our supporters are saying," Ball said. "They are wondering if a club in our position can afford the luxury of spending money on a player who isn't ready for the first team. I can only answer that, if I hadn't got him now, some other club in the Premiership would."

That included Manchester United, who had been monitoring Phillips' progress. Having lost Giggs to their bitter rivals, a second lost treasure would not have been forgiven.

"Martin has been signed for tomorrow, not for today," Ball continued. "He is a little boy from the West Country who has never been away from home before and he will need time to settle at a big club in a big city. He's used to green fields and the countryside, not Moss Side. I'm not even sure he knows what girls are yet."

"I want to give him time to adjust to his new surroundings. I don't want to damage his confidence by throwing him in at the deep end too soon but I would expect him to be in contention for a place in the Premiership side before the end of the season."

"Maybe if we were in a comfortable mid-table position I could afford to put him in, but not now. We need all the experience we can get at the moment."

Needs can overthrow intentions, however, and it was noticeable that the name of Phillips was added to an injury-stricken City squad for their match against Chelsea last Saturday. He did not make it to the substitutes' bench but you sense his progress is such that it is just a question of time.

Then the real question can be asked. Is he the £10m man?



Premature evaluation: Once priced at £10m, Martin Phillips trains with Manchester City yesterday. Photograph: David Ashdown

Australian big hitter with a bigger future

He is known as "Scud", as in missile, which is convenient since his name, Mark Philippoussis, is as big as his serve.

Philippoussis, in common with the American Pete Sampras, another of Greek ancestry, has sought inspiration from the accomplishments of the great Australian champions of the past. But Philippoussis may find that he is cursed by them, being an Aussie himself and subject to the weight of expectancy which passes from one potential prodigy to the next.

Philippoussis is among the latest crop of contenders, along with Patrick Rafter, Jason Stoltenberg, Michael Tabbott and Scott Draper. Although Draper has moved to the power-dominated modern game, from a 6ft 4in frame to a desire to hammer the opposition into submission.

"I have never seen an Australian hit the ball as hard in any movement," observed his compatriot, Mark Woodforde. "It doesn't matter what the score is, in a practice match, or a training session, or even in a proper match, he just wants to wallop it."

Belting the ball does not guarantee success but, as Woodforde pointed out: "Mark has great success with that at the moment, and I think he has got a very bright future."

Ranked No 274 when given a wild card for the Australian Open in January, Philippoussis had risen to within striking distance of the top 20 in October after advancing to his third ATP Tour final of the year.

Encouraged by a stirring first-round performance in Melbourne, where he lost in five sets to Stefan Edberg, Philippoussis continued to impress in Scottsdale, Arizona, in February. He accounted for the Russian baseliner, Andrei Chesnokov, and the American serve-volleyer, Todd Martin, before falling to Jim Courier's hefty groundstrokes in the final.

After something of a lull, during which Philippoussis largely was defeated by more experienced and higher-ranked opponents, the youngster launched another impressive attack in October, elevating his ranking from No 90 to No 32 on the strength of a fortnight's results indoors in the Far East. The surge of form may have been related to a move to the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Florida.

While Philippoussis has prospered on rubberised concrete courts and indoor surfaces, it remains to be seen whether his physical prowess

Mark Philippoussis is custom-made for the modern power game, says John Roberts

translates successfully to Wimbledon. Returning serve on grass has proved a problem for other mighty servers.

Having been a finalist in the junior event at the All England Club in 1994, Philippoussis would appear to have the right credentials, although Ivan Lendl, a winner of the Wimbledon boys title, failed to capture the major prize.

Lendl is among a number of people who have contributed to Philippoussis's education. The former world No 1 invited him to train at his home in Connecticut, just as he did the young Sampras. John Newcombe and Tony Roche also ensured that Philippoussis was given an early taste of Davis Cup atmosphere last year by taking him to Russia as a hitting partner. But the strongest influence is his father.

Nick Philippoussis gave up his job as a Melbourne taxi driver to supervise his son's



Philippoussis: Hard-hitter

development. He is given credit for rescuing Mark's career after pranks during a junior trip to Asia less than three years ago resulted in a six-month suspension and a ban from official touring teams.

The youngster responded positively to his father's ultimatum to make up his mind if he wanted to play tennis, and, if he did, to give it total commitment.

On the other hand, when a wild card requested for Wimbledon this year was not forthcoming, an offended Nick advised Mark not to enter the qualifying event, and so he gave the world's most important championships a miss. This cost Mark valuable experience, at the least, and was another example that tennis fathers do not always know best.

Villeneuve prepared for all the expectations

The Williams-Renault mechanics, informed their new driver had dumped his car off the circuit, stood around awaiting his return and with it a familiar, technical excuse. At last the small figure, helmet in hand, appeared in the garage. "Sorry," he said coyly.

No familiar technical excuses, no excuses at all. Even when his engineer claimed responsibility for suggesting they run with slick tyres on a damp track, the new man would have none of it. "No, I was driving the car," he insisted.

In more ways than one, Jacques Villeneuve promises to be a refreshing addition to the Formula One line-up.

The winner of the 1995 IndyCar series, he is another son of a famous father. Unlike

the States-tied Michael Andretti, however, Villeneuve is a French Canadian with a home in Monaco, cultural empathy with Europe and a thoroughly urbane outlook on life.

Also unlike the ill-starred Andretti, he is likely to have, along with his team-mate, Damon Hill, the best car in the championship, and, come the first race in Melbourne, on 10 March, he will have the benefit of many test sessions.

Hill, too, has had to pursue a career under the weight of the "son of" mantle, but while his father, and Andretti's, fulfilled themselves, Gilles Villeneuve was denied that opportunity. He was killed in qualifying for the Belgian Grand Prix in 1982.

The second coming of a Villeneuve to Formula One has

inevitably stirred emotional expectations that he will now take up the torch and accomplish the mission. He is prepared for the expectations, but not the mission. Jacques, who was 11 when his father died, said: "A lot of people would like to hear me say that, but I'm not going to say that just to make everyone happy. Yes, I sense the expectation is there, but that's not the reason I am in racing. I am not racing because my father left too early and I have to carry on the name and tradition and all that."

"I'm really proud of my father and he's a legend and always will be, but I am racing because I am having fun. I enjoy it, and it's been going well."

It did not instantly go well for the young Villeneuve and the

Another son of a famous father will be a refreshing addition to the Formula One circuit. Derick Allsop reports

modest beginnings perhaps eased the burden. He recalled: "It was very hard, as everybody knew me because of my father. But I was very much a kid then and I didn't really care what was going on around me, so it didn't hurt me that much."

Villeneuve attended racing schools in Canada and flexed his competitive instincts in 1988, in the Alfa Romeo Italian Touring Championship. "I did three races and crashed after five laps every time."

"Then I went into Italian

Formula Three and that was the first real racing I did. I would be maybe a second and a half off pole and not qualify, and it did look terrible. But it was a great school and with times like that in Britain I would have qualified eighth."

"I always knew, though — and I don't know why — that I would make it. This was what I really wanted to do and every year it gets better and better."

After three years in Italian Formula Three he moved to Japanese Formula Three and

from there back to north America. "Like all Europeans, I thought only of Formula One, then I opened my mind to both worlds."

He developed his own style: less spectacular than his father's, and less erratic. He won the IndyCar Rookie of the Year for 1994 and followed up with the championship. Williams tested him and decided he was the driver to replace David Coulthard.

Villeneuve is no more willing than Coulthard to play No 2 to Hill, but he regards the British pair's well-chronicled skirmishes with disdain.

"I think all that stuff is useless," he said. "There's no point. I think you should just do your job. I'm not sure what is the truth and what isn't, so I can't really have an opinion."

"My relationship with Damon is great. At a race it may be different, but there's enough pressure from the racing itself without pressure from within a team. It isn't beneficial, it doesn't make you perform. It becomes in-team fighting instead of championship fighting, and I don't think that's positive."

Villeneuve acknowledges he has been given a much-coveted chance and that he cannot afford to consider 1996 a learning year. Andretti was sacked before completing a full season.

"You do that if you do don't go with a top team," Villeneuve said. "This is a winning team. It's a winning car, probably the best, everything is there to win, so as a driver you're not paid to cruise."



Villeneuve: Urbane outlook

around, you're paid to give it your best shot.

"We are going to work towards winning the championship. That doesn't mean we are going to make it, but I feel it's not out of the question. The IndyCar, I had felt like a second pair of socks, and once we get there with Formula One it's going to be beautiful."

SOME INSURANCE QUOTES ARE SO HIGH, YOU'D THINK THEY DIDN'T WANT YOUR BUSINESS [THEY DON'T.]

Surprisingly enough, there are many reasons why an insurance company won't insure you.

Whether you're looking for household or car insurance: if you live in the wrong area, if you've had a break-in or accident previously, or if you're simply the wrong age, you're likely to end up with a policy at an inflated price.

However at Swinton, we have access to a wide range of policies, so whatever your circumstances, we're more likely to find a policy that's right for you and your pocket.

For competitive household or car insurance, telephone Swinton or contact your local branch. You'll soon be reassured that at least one company wants your business. (We do.)

ferg

sport
chaos
freeze

Slow going '0

الرياض

Ferguson turns up the pressure on Keegan

"You have to earn the right to be a champion," Alex Ferguson said after his Manchester United team had beaten Newcastle on Wednesday.

He was right, but it also sounded suspiciously like the Manchester United manager was beginning the psychological battle which is so much a part of a modern title campaign. Last year his world was so needed Blackburn that even the mild-mannered Tim Flowers was provoked into a response

to his calculated barbs about "pressure". Rovers did go on to win the title, but only just. Their closing record of seven points from six games was hardly championship form and, had Manchester United taken their chances at West Ham on the final day, the title would have remained at Old Trafford.

The previous year Blackburn had closed a 15-point lead, only to find the effort left them unable to pass Manchester United. Two years earlier United

had themselves let slip a nine-point lead to Leeds. Those examples underline that seven points, Newcastle's current lead over Manchester United, is a slim cushion with 18 games to go. Even so, only Arsenal in 1989 of the last eight champions have not been leading the table on New Year's Day – so history remains on Newcastle's side.

Their away form is a problem, although between now and 2 March, when Manchester United

Manchester United's victory over the leaders means the title race is now a test of character, says Glenn Moore

visited St James' Park, they have only one difficult trip, to nearby Middlesbrough on 10 February. Equally worrying is the loss of Keith Gillespie, so crucial a part of Newcastle's gameplan. He is unlikely to return from the ruptured thigh tendon he suffered on Wednesday much before that March match. With

Ruel Fox now at Tottenham Kevin Keegan's options are limited, especially as Scott Sellars, who could have gone on the left with David Ginola switching wings, has just moved to Bolton. It would not be a surprise if Keegan spent to fill the gap, especially as rumours persist that Gillespie has not settled on

Tyneside. After spending £14m in the summer, this season has a win-or-bust feel about it for the Magpies. Manchester United, by contrast, are in a transitional season – that they are challenging so strongly is a bonus.

It remains to be seen if their young players can sustain their performance. Much relies upon Ryan Giggs and Eric Cantona maintaining fitness, form and availability.

Their win will also give renewed hope to the other con-

tenders, notably Liverpool, whose form is returning after a bad November. Tottenham, who are having a good run and acquiring the unfamiliar sobriquet of "hard to beat" – and Arsenal, who will soon have Dennis Bergkamp back.

The likelihood remains that the champions will be Manchester United or Newcastle. The latter are favourites. They seem invincible at home, they have the resources to buy if their challenge continues to falter, and

they are not over-reliant on one man – although Peter Beardsley is still the key influence.

But do they have the "bottle"? Manchester United and Blackburn both won their first recent titles after experiencing narrow failure the previous season. Newcastle led the table last season but were never in contention when it mattered. Kevin Keegan's undoubted motivational powers, and Terry McDermott's ability to relax players, will now be tested.

Sport fears chaos as freeze bites

NICK DUXBURY and DAVE HADFIELD

Sport was confronting the prospect of major disruption to the weekend programme today as the weather showed no sign of releasing its grip.

Football, rugby union and rugby league were all expected to lose games to frozen pitches, with racing again wiped out today, with little hope of much action tomorrow.

In the Premiership, the matches at Aston Villa and West Ham United look vulnerable, but only three games in the entire Scottish League (Rangers v Hibs, Dundee United v Airdrie and Queen's Park v Ross County) have any chance of surviving.

A delay in the resumption of rugby union's Courage League programme could provoke a club v country controversy. All tomorrow's five League One matches appear set to be postponed and club officials are pencilling in the blank date of 13 January to re-stage them.

However, that will cut across England's Five Nations Championship plans, with the squad having warm-weather training abroad that weeked as part of their preparations to play France in Paris on 20 January. Already Moseley's investment in a £1,000 pitch cover has failed to save their two most lucrative games of the season. They lost £5,000 when their Boxing Day derby with Coventry was called off and tomorrow's League Two game against leaders Northampton – expected to bring in £25,000 – has been called off.

Plans to salvage tomorrow's rugby league Regal Trophy

semi-final between St Helens and Warrington by switching it to Wigan's heated pitch were scuppered when the local police declared they unable to supervise the match at short notice.

With Saints' Knowsley Road ground described as unplayable yesterday and no thaw in sight, efforts are now being laid to play the match next Thursday.

The broader weather picture is also causing concern in rugby league, with the New Year's Eve and New Year's Day programmes under threat and an overwhelming log-jam of fixtures building up.

The game's final winter season is due to end on 21 January, but Wigan still have four league matches, plus a semi-final and possibly the final of the Regal Trophy to play in a little over three weeks. Warrington, Halifax, Bradford and Oldham – the latter three arguably the coldest grounds in the league – have five league matches to play.

A blank week for British jumping enthusiasts looks the most likely bet after all today's race meetings were called off.

Tomorrow's meeting at Nottingham has already been abandoned and there will be inspections today at Catterick (8.30am), Newbury (9.30) and Folliscombe (noon). A total of 24 meetings have now been lost this week with only Wolverhampton's double-header on sand tomorrow breaking the gloom.

One sport which is certain to beat the freeze is the Bupa International Cross-Country event at Durham tomorrow. Heavy snow had put the meeting, which is part of the World Cross-Country Challenge circuit, in doubt, but an inspection yesterday gave the all-clear.

PREMIERSHIP PROSPECTS OF PLAY FOR SATURDAY

Arsenal v Wimbledon

The Gunners have always put a high priority on under-soil heating. They were one of the first London clubs to have a system installed and updated it five years ago.

Prospect: Good.

Aston Villa v Sheffield Wed

Villa are still relying on sheeting to cover the pitch – and were caught out when the Boxing Day game against Liverpool was frozen out. Chairman Doug Ellis has promised to install an under-soil system in the summer of 1997, but until then they are at the mercy of the weather.

Prospect: Could fall victim to weather again.

Blackburn v Tottenham

Blacks originally won their system six years ago, but it has been improved since Jack Walker poured millions into the redevelopment of Ewood Park, blazed the benefit when their Boxing Day opening fixture against Manchester City went ahead.

Prospect: Good.

Bolton v Coventry

Wanderers were one of the first clubs to install an under-soil system and were able to stage Wednesday's match against Leeds despite temperatures dipping to around minus five.

Prospect: Good.

Chelsea v Liverpool

Stanford Bridge managing director Colin Hutchinson is a great believer that under-soil heating, installed by Chelsea in the mid-1980s, should be mandatory.

Prospect: Good.

Manchester Utd v QPR

Old Trafford has one of the most up-to-date heating systems in the country, originally installed eight years ago. It can work to temperatures as low as minus 12 – as demonstrated with the smooth surface for yesterday's clash with Newcastle.

Prospect: Good.

Nottingham v Middlesbrough

Forest installed their under-pitch heating system last season and duly rescheduled today's match against Sheffield Wednesday, going ahead. The East Midlands is one of the few areas of the country not yet hit by the cold snap.

Prospect: Good.

Southampton v Man City

Saints are one of five Premiership clubs without heating. Instead they rely on covers. Traditionally under-temperature in the south coast has helped the club build an impressive record of avoiding postponements.

Prospect: Reasonable.

West Ham v Newcastle

The Hammers lost their Boxing Day game against Coventry, but it was the first match frozen off in years. They rely on covers, but are reviewing the installation of a heating system.

Prospect: Another possible weather victim.



Feathers flying: Keith Deller takes aim in his match against Kevin Spiolek at Circus Tavern, Purfleet yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Smoke signals a new era for rebels of the arrows

Greg Wood reports from Purfleet, where the unofficial championship of darts gives the best players in the world the chance to underline their superiority

As Keith Deller and Kevin Spiolek took their final practice throws before the first match at the World Darts Championship yesterday, a technician made an adjustment to a smoke machine at the back of the auditorium: he turned it up. This, after all, was darts, the sport in which you can't just feel the atmosphere, you can see it as well.

A few years ago, the spectators could be relied upon to provide more than enough smoke of their own, but no longer. Fug machines, not to mention giddily-spinning spotlights, pounding disco beats and highly inventive camera angles, have been part of darts for three years, since most of the world's best players broke away from the ruling World Darts Federation and signed up with Sky television. As a result, the championship currently taking place at Purfleet's Circus Tavern is unofficial, but few who know the game will dispute that its winner will be the best player in the world.

When the "rebel" World Darts Council was formed, many of its members were ac-

cused of putting their own interests before those of the sport. Fading talents such as Eric Birtow, Josky Wilson and Cliff Lazarenko, the giants of its mid-80s heyday, could now delay their retirement for a few more seasons. Yet the very best players went with them – Dennis Priestley, Rod Harrington, Alan Warriner and, above all, Phil Taylor, reckoned by many to be the finest thrower ever to toe an oche. Whoever wins the official championship, which starts on 1 January, would need a three-set start to get close to the WDC's best.

The split has also cost many

of the players money. Harrington, last year's runner-up at the Circus Tavern and rated No 2 in the world, estimates he has lost £30,000 in the three years since, as WDC players are now banned from all other darts events. "I used to go to say the Austrian Open, I'd get maybe £1,500 for a few exhibitions beforehand and then if I won the tournament I might go home £4,000 better off for a week's work. I'm not doing too badly now, but the wife's still working."

Harrington won his match with Nigel Justice yesterday, but after his defeat by Larry Butler

the previous evening. Justice must beat Butler today if Harrington is to advance from the round-robin first round to the knockout stage.

The defeat by Butler still rankled yesterday – the American, it seemed, had engaged Harrington in some distinctly unsporting backstage chat between sets.

When a millimetre either way is the difference between £1,250 or – in the case of the overall winner, £14,000 – the pressure on a throwing arm is considerable. "Right now I can feel some nerves in my stomach," Harrington said an hour

before his match, "but as it gets closer the nerves turn to adrenaline, your eyes start popping and you can get really aggressive."

Match or not, you can coax a similar reaction from any darts player by describing their sport as a game. A game, as Steve Davis once responded to a similar accusation about snooker, is something you do for fun. With its demands of physical skill and mental resilience, darts is a much of a sport as any other, and one which, in WDC-land at least, grows stronger by the year.

The new sponsor for this year's tournament, Vernons

Pools, is an encouraging departure for a sport which had previously been restricted to fags, booze and the *News of the World*. Up in the Sky control room, meanwhile, the director was delighted with his latest angle, the miniature "Dennis-cam" strapped to Priestley's waist to pick up the nuances of flight and spin as he moved around the board.

It may need a little refinement – or Day-glo darts – before the waist-camera becomes an essential part of the coverage, but even from Priestley's waistband, Bristol's decline was all too apparent. It was the match the punters had come to see, but Priestley had wrapped up 3-0, in barely 40 minutes.

As the Crafty Cockney's start begins to wane, however, his sport is again on the rise. As the music system blasted out before the start of play: "Things Can Only Get Better". True, they were playing it so that the MC could yell "Deller" instead of "better" at the end of each line, but after all, this is still darts.

Poole flounder under the pressure of financial problems

Non-League football
RUPERT METCALF

If ever a club needs a change of fortune in the new year, it is Poole Town of the Beazer Homes League. Stranded at the bottom of the Southern Division, having lost all of their League games to date, Poole also face an uncertain long-term future as they lack a permanent home.

After Boxing Day's 4-2 home defeat by Weymouth, Poole's playing record in the Beazer is played 19, lost 19, with a goal difference of minus 73. However, they did have something to celebrate on Tuesday: They scored twice in a match for the first time this campaign.

Poole's dreadful financial state has meant that they have been unable to pay players this season, which is the main reason

for their terrible results – they have been unable to compete with rival clubs with a wage budget. It has been a tough year for Poole's manager, Keith Miller, a former West Ham and Bournemouth defender: at the age of 47 he had to turn out in one recent League game when he was sick with flu.

"We are lucky that seven or eight senior players have decided to stick with the club,"

Mark Willis, Poole's secretary, said yesterday. "We've been filling the gaps with youth-team lads. They can cope with narrow defeats, but six or seven-goal beatings are hard to bear."

The club was obliged to vacate Poole Stadium, its base since 1933, last year. The local borough council has plans to develop the site for use as a speedway and greyhound venue, and has made it plain that there is

no room for football as well. Town now share the County Ground with Hamworthy United, a Dorset Combination club, but efforts to develop this venue have been frustrated by planning permission problems.

Although the council has promised the club some financial assistance, it has been unable to assist so far in the search for a location for a new stadium, which is Town's

ultimate ambition. "The determination to keep battling away has shone through in the last few months," Willis said. "We've been going for 115 years, so we'll do our best to survive a couple of tough ones."

Marine, of the UniBond League, have been given £10,000 by Bolton Wanderers following Jason McAteer's £4.5m move from Burnley Park to Liverpool.

SPORTING DIGEST

Slow going for Sayonara

Sailing

The American maxi Sayonara, owned by computer billionaire Larry Ellison, was set to win the Sydney to Hobart race overnight, writes Stuart Alexander. However, light winds over the last 24 hours destroyed any hopes of the 75-footer, on which Rupert Murdoch is crewing, heating the 20-year-old record time of two days, 14 hours, 36 minutes and 56 seconds.

But Sayonara, which slowed from an average of over 12 knots in the first 24 hours to less than five in the last 12, was well clear of the leading Australian contender, George Snow's Brindabella, with Peter Walker's 69ft Foxell Amazon in third.

Forecasts of a brisk 15-20 knot north-westerly promised a fast finish for the chasing bunch of nearly 100 yachts and the opportunity for a win on handicap by a smaller yacht and place changes among the eight three-boat teams in the Southern Cross Cup.

The solo sailor Sam Brewster will start an attempt to sail round the world against the prevailing winds and currents on New Year's Day from Brazil, where she has been repairing the 67ft Heath Insured after damage curtailed her original attempt, which started from Britain last January. She will return to a line off Ushant, on the Brittany coast, and then sail back down the Atlantic to Brazil.

Athletics

Yelena Isinbayeva, the former 100 metres hurdles Olympic champion and world record holder, is expecting a baby and will miss the Olympic Games in Atlanta in July.

Basketball

NBA: LA Clippers 116 Charlotte 107; Milwaukee 99 Minnesota 84; Washington 115 Boston 94; Phoenix 105 Philadelphia 90; Portland 135 Boston 108; Seattle 99 Denver 83.

Cricket

CASTLE CUP (third day of four): Flintshire 223 and 121 for 8; Western Priests 422 in 40 overs; 112; 1st innings 64; 2nd innings 57; 3rd innings 50; 4th innings 9-87. East London: Border won by 30 wickets. Free State 188 and 167; 1st innings 7-62; 2nd innings 30; 3rd innings 58; 4th innings 6-61 and 55 for 0.

Darts

WORLD POOLS CHAMPIONSHIP (Circus Tavern, Purfleet) Wednesday's late results: Group Five: 1. Butler (80) vs 2. Harrington (80) 3-2; Group Six: 1. Anderson (80) vs 2. Venter (80) 3-1; Group Seven: 1. Harrington (80) vs 2. Brown (80) 3-0. Yesterday: Group Two: 1. Deller (80) vs 2. Spiolek (80) 3-2; Group Three: 1. Harrington (80) vs 2. Venter (80) 3-0; Group Four: 1. Priestley (80) vs 2. E. Butler (80) 3-0.

Football

WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: FA Cup: 1st Round: 1. Bolton Wanderers 0 Leeds 0; 2. Bolton 4; 3. Weymouth 1; 4. Weymouth 1; 5. Weymouth 1; 6. Weymouth 1; 7. Weymouth 1; 8. Weymouth 1; 9. Weymouth 1; 10. Weymouth 1; 11. Weymouth 1; 12. Weymouth 1; 13. Weymouth 1; 14. Weymouth 1; 15. Weymouth 1; 16. Weymouth 1; 17. Weymouth 1; 18. Weymouth 1; 19. Weymouth 1; 20. Weymouth 1; 21. Weymouth 1; 22. Weymouth 1; 23. Weymouth 1; 24. Weymouth 1; 25. Weymouth 1; 26. Weymouth 1; 27. Weymouth 1; 28. Weymouth 1; 29. Weymouth 1; 30. Weymouth 1; 31. Weymouth 1; 32. Weymouth 1; 33. Weymouth 1; 34. Weymouth 1; 35. Weymouth 1; 36. Weymouth 1; 37. Weymouth 1; 38. Weymouth 1; 39. Weymouth 1; 40. Weymouth 1; 41. Weymouth 1; 42. Weymouth 1; 43. Weymouth 1; 44. Weymouth 1; 45. Weymouth 1; 46. Weymouth 1; 47. Weymouth 1; 48. Weymouth 1; 49. Weymouth 1; 50. Weymouth 1; 51. Weymouth 1; 52. Weymouth 1; 53. Weymouth 1; 54. Weymouth 1; 55. Weymouth 1; 56. Weymouth 1; 57. Weymouth 1; 58. Weymouth 1; 59. Weymouth 1; 60. Weymouth 1; 61. Weymouth 1; 62. Weymouth 1; 63. Weymouth 1; 64. Weymouth 1; 65. Weymouth 1; 66. Weymouth 1; 67. Weymouth 1; 68. Weymouth 1; 69. Weymouth 1; 70. Weymouth 1; 71. Weymouth 1; 72. Weymouth 1; 73. Weymouth 1; 74. Weymouth 1; 75. Weymouth 1; 76. Weymouth 1; 77. Weymouth 1; 78. Weymouth 1; 79. Weymouth 1; 80. Weymouth 1; 81. Weymouth 1; 82. Weymouth 1; 83. Weymouth 1; 84. Weymouth 1; 85. Weymouth 1; 86. Weymouth 1; 87. Weymouth 1; 88. Weymouth 1; 89. Weymouth 1; 90. Weymouth 1; 91. Weymouth 1; 92. Weymouth 1; 93. Weymouth 1; 94. Weymouth 1; 95. Weymouth 1; 96. Weymouth 1; 97. Weymouth 1; 98. Weymouth 1; 99. Weymouth 1; 100. Weymouth 1; 101. Weymouth 1; 102. Weymouth 1; 103. Weymouth 1; 104. Weymouth 1; 105. Weymouth 1; 106. Weymouth 1; 107. Weymouth 1; 108. Weymouth 1; 109. Weymouth 1; 110. Weymouth 1; 111. Weymouth 1; 112. Weymouth 1; 113. Weymouth 1; 114. Weymouth 1; 115. Weymouth 1; 116. Weymouth 1; 117. Weymouth 1; 118. Weymouth 1; 119. Weymouth 1; 120. Weymouth 1; 121. Weymouth 1; 122. Weymouth 1; 123. Weymouth 1; 124. Weymouth 1; 125. Weymouth 1; 126. Weymouth 1; 127. Weymouth 1; 128. Weymouth 1; 129. Weymouth 1; 130. Weymouth 1; 131. Weymouth 1; 132. Weymouth 1; 133. Weymouth 1; 134. Weymouth 1; 135. Weymouth 1; 136. Weymouth 1; 137. Weymouth 1; 138. Weymouth 1; 139. Weymouth 1; 140. Weymouth 1; 141. Weymouth 1; 142. Weymouth 1; 143. Weymouth 1; 144. Weymouth 1; 145. Weymouth 1; 146. Weymouth 1; 147. Weymouth 1; 148. Weymouth 1; 149. Weymouth 1; 150. Weymouth 1; 151. Weymouth 1; 152. Weymouth 1; 153. Weymouth 1; 154. Weymouth 1; 155. Weymouth 1; 156. Weymouth 1; 157. Weymouth 1; 158. Weymouth 1; 159. Weymouth 1; 160. Weymouth 1; 161. Weymouth 1; 162. Weymouth 1; 163. Weymouth 1; 164. Weymouth 1; 165. Weymouth 1; 166. Weymouth 1; 167. Weymouth 1; 168. Weymouth 1; 169. Weymouth 1; 170. Weymouth 1; 171. Weymouth 1; 172. Weymouth 1; 173. Weymouth 1; 174. Weymouth 1; 175. Weymouth 1; 176. Weymouth 1; 177. Weymouth 1; 178. Weymouth 1; 179. Weymouth 1; 180. Weymouth 1; 181. Weymouth 1; 182. Weymouth 1; 183. Weymouth 1; 184. Weymouth 1; 185. Weymouth 1; 186. Weymouth 1; 187. Weymouth 1; 188. Weymouth 1; 189. Weymouth 1; 190. Weymouth 1; 191. Weymouth 1; 192. Weymouth 1; 193. Weymouth 1; 194. Weymouth 1; 195. Weymouth 1; 196. Weymouth 1; 197. Weymouth 1; 198. Weymouth 1; 199. Weymouth 1; 200. Weymouth 1; 201. Weymouth 1; 202. Weymouth 1; 203. Weymouth 1; 204. Weymouth 1; 205. Weymouth 1; 206. Weymouth 1; 207. Weymouth 1; 208. Weymouth 1; 209. Weymouth 1; 210. Weymouth 1; 211. Weymouth 1; 212. Weymouth 1; 213. Weymouth 1; 214. Weymouth 1; 215. Weymouth 1; 216. Weymouth 1; 217. Weymouth 1; 218. Weymouth 1; 219. Weymouth 1; 220. Weymouth 1; 221. Weymouth 1; 222. Weymouth 1; 223. Weymouth 1; 224. Weymouth 1; 225. Weymouth 1; 226. Weymouth 1; 227. Weymouth 1; 228. Weymouth 1; 229. Weymouth 1; 230. Weymouth 1; 231. Weymouth 1; 232. Weymouth 1; 233. Weymouth 1; 234. Weymouth 1; 235. Weymouth 1; 236. Weymouth 1; 237. Weymouth 1; 238. Weymouth 1; 239. Weymouth 1; 240. Weymouth 1; 241. Weymouth 1; 242. Weymouth 1; 243. Weymouth 1; 244. Weymouth 1; 245. Weymouth 1; 246. Weymouth 1; 247. Weymouth 1; 248. Weymouth 1; 249. Weymouth 1; 250. Weymouth 1; 251. Weymouth 1; 252. Weymouth 1; 253. Weymouth 1; 254. Weymouth 1; 255. Weymouth 1; 256. Weymouth 1; 257. Weymouth 1; 258. Weymouth 1; 259. Weymouth 1; 260. Weymouth 1; 261. Weymouth 1; 262. Weymouth 1; 263. Weymouth 1; 264. Weymouth 1; 265. Weymouth 1; 266. Weymouth 1; 267. Weymouth 1; 268. Weymouth 1; 269. Weymouth 1; 270. Weymouth 1; 271. Weymouth 1; 272. Weymouth 1; 273. Weymouth 1; 274. Weymouth 1; 275. Weymouth 1; 276. Weymouth 1; 277. Weymouth 1; 278. Weymouth 1; 279. Weymouth 1; 280. Weymouth 1; 281. Weymouth 1; 282. Weymouth 1; 283. Weymouth 1; 284. Weymouth 1; 285. Weymouth 1; 286. Weymouth 1; 287. Weymouth 1; 288. Weymouth 1; 289. Weymouth 1; 290. Weymouth 1; 291. Weymouth 1; 292. Weymouth 1; 293. Weymouth 1; 294. Weymouth 1; 295. Weymouth 1; 296. Weymouth 1; 297. Weymouth 1; 298. Weymouth 1; 299. Weymouth 1; 300. Weymouth 1; 301. Weymouth 1; 302. Weymouth 1; 303. Weymouth 1; 304. Weymouth 1; 305. Weymouth 1; 306. Weymouth 1; 307. Weymouth 1; 308. Weymouth 1; 309. Weymouth 1; 310. Weymouth 1; 311. Weymouth 1; 312. Weymouth 1; 313. Weymouth 1; 314. Weymouth 1; 315. Weymouth 1; 316. Weymouth 1; 317. Weymouth 1; 318. Weymouth 1; 319. Weymouth 1; 320. Weymouth 1; 321. Weymouth 1; 322. Weymouth 1; 323. Weymouth 1; 324. Weymouth 1; 325. Weymouth 1; 326. Weymouth 1; 327. Weymouth 1; 328. Weymouth 1; 329. Weymouth 1; 330. Weymouth 1; 331. Weymouth 1; 332. Weymouth 1; 333. Weymouth 1; 334. Weymouth 1; 335. Weymouth 1; 336. Weymouth 1; 337. Weymouth 1; 338. Weymouth 1; 339. Weymouth 1; 340. Weymouth 1; 341. Weymouth 1; 342. Weymouth 1; 343. Weymouth 1; 344. Weymouth 1; 345. Weymouth 1; 346. Weymouth 1; 347. Weymouth 1; 348. Weymouth 1; 349. Weymouth 1; 350. Weymouth 1; 351. Weymouth 1; 352. Weymouth 1; 353. Weymouth 1; 354. Weymouth 1; 355. Weymouth 1; 356. Weymouth 1; 357. Weymouth 1; 358. Weymouth 1; 359. Weymouth 1; 360. Weymouth 1; 361. Weymouth 1; 362. Weymouth 1; 363. Weymouth 1; 364. Weymouth 1; 365. Weymouth 1; 366. Weymouth 1; 367. Weymouth 1; 368. Weymouth 1; 369. Weymouth 1; 370. Weymouth 1; 371. Weymouth 1; 372. Weymouth 1; 373. Weymouth 1; 374. Weymouth 1; 375. Weymouth 1; 376. Weymouth 1; 377. Weymouth 1; 378. Weymouth 1; 379. Weymouth 1; 380. Weymouth 1; 381. Weymouth 1; 382. Weymouth 1; 383. Weymouth 1; 384. Weymouth 1; 385. Weymouth 1; 386. Weymouth 1; 387. Weymouth 1; 388. Weymouth 1; 389. Weymouth 1; 390. Weymouth 1; 391. Weymouth 1; 392. Weymouth 1; 393. Weymouth 1; 394. Weymouth 1; 395. Weymouth 1; 396. Weymouth 1; 397. Weymouth 1; 398. Weymouth 1; 399. Weymouth 1; 400. Weymouth 1; 401. Weymouth 1; 402. Weymouth 1; 403. Weymouth 1; 404. Weymouth 1; 405. Weymouth 1; 406. Weymouth 1; 407. Weymouth 1; 408. Weymouth 1; 409. Weymouth 1; 410. Weymouth 1; 411. Weymouth 1; 412. Weymouth 1;

